

A Bad Week at the Wizengamot

A/N: What would have happened if Harry had been convicted by the Wizengamot after defending himself from dementors before his fifth year at Hogwarts? Humorous!

Edited 8/10/08

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

“...and this august body finds you, Harry Potter, guilty of misuse of underage magic. We expel you from Hogwarts and order your wand snapped. May you live a miserable life among the Muggles.”

The Auror who was holding Harry's wand handed it to Cornelius Fudge. The small, plump wizard looked singularly pleased with himself as he'd just delivered the Wizengamot's 'justice.' With a look of glee, he snapped Harry's wand into two pieces. Many of the elderly witches and wizards were peering to the action in front of them. It wasn't every day a famous wand got snapped.

But instead of anger or tears or any strong negative emotion, Harry Potter stood up, nodded to his former Headmaster – who was frozen in his overstuffed chair and trying to calculate the damage this caused – and his former babysitter, Mrs. Figg, and then addressed the wizarding court.

“Sir, I have already lived a fairly miserable life among the muggles I'm related to. However, I would like to thank all of you for showing your true colors in this challenging situation. I realize how difficult it is to ignore the bribes you've all obviously accepted.

"I understand the fear mongering that Fudge is doing; his attempts at discrediting me so he doesn't have to think about Voldemort. The money that Lucius Malfoy is sprinkling around to get everyone to stop thinking. You've won this round.

"You've cleared up a number of problems for me – and created more than you can imagine for yourselves. I would like everyone here to

know that I will be leaving Britain forever. With all the good and bad that that entails.

"I wish you well dealing with the truth – Voldemort has returned and all of you who are not Death Eaters already are on his target list as he tries to assume control of this country. Best of luck. Practice up your shielding spells...and remember to duck if you see green light coming your way."

With that, to the dull roar of indignant people, Harry walked out of the courtroom. Seven minutes later, he left Britain altogether.

But the Wizengamot wasn't yet released from its duty. Albus Dumbledore, failed counsel for Harry Potter, had more than a few more words to share with his former colleagues.

"Well, I can see that the average intelligence level has gone downhill since you forced me out, Cornelius and Dolores..."

"Now see here, Albus," the Minister for Magic started to lecture. "The law is the law..."

"No one charged with misuse of underage magic has been tried by the full Wizengamot... Not ever, Cornelius. The world will see this as the political torment of a young boy by a corrupt administration – one who denies the problems that every other country sees."

"That's foolish, Dumbledore," Dolores Umbridge said. "Who will ever know what happened here? I'm not going to talk about it? Are you?" She tried to add a bit of menace to her girly, grating voice.

"The person who is going to share his memory of what happened here just walked out of this building. And you'll never get your paws on him again. But, my dear deluded former colleagues, he will no longer feel constrained to be merciful. I've held him off since you engineered this travesty of justice. But he's been planning for the worst – what exactly, I don't know. But your idiocy will cost you more than you know."

“What threats are these? Have you finally cracked, old man?” Fudge was looking rather furious by now.

“Because you fools tried him as an adult, and subjected him to an adult’s punishment, he’s now legally and magically an adult...”

“So what,” Dolores said. “He’s just an undereducated, self-inflated child.”

Dumbledore closed his eyes for a moment. “Madam, he’s more Slytherin than anyone since Salazar himself. I hope you each enjoy what comes next. I expect this to hurt...a lot.”

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Cornelius was enjoying a rather peaceful Monday morning – especially since the Potter boy had been thoroughly discredited and then announced his own exile. Well, it was a peaceful morning until the head of his Goblin Relations office stormed inside Cornelius’ office, interrupting his mid-morning tea.

“Big trouble, big...” Dirk Cresswell looked flushed, out of breath, and ready to cry.

Cornelius set down his cup. Dirk had always been a bit excitable this way. Pity if one of the chief goblins had a hang nail or some such nonsense. That’s all the more severe it ever was with those surly little beasts.

“The goblins just lost ten percent of their assets and they’re blaming you. More than one of them wants to roast you on an open flame and serve you up at a goblin feast...”

Cornelius frowned. How had he lost the goblins anything?

“Explain. Clearly, simply. You know I don’t have a head for details or complicated explanations.”

Dirk sighed and tried to calm himself down. “You forced Harry Potter to leave Britain. Well, he took his assets with him.”

Cornelius considered this statement for more than a minute before he understood what his underling was hinting at. Then he began spluttering. "Ten percent of Gringotts? Belong to the Potters? Ridiculous. I'd have known a thing like that. I'd have made the boy an important campaign contributor if that were true..."

"It's true... They were wealthy enough when Harold Potter died, but then neither James nor Harry could do anything with the assets. So the goblins managed it... Twenty-eight percent returns per year, one of them bragged. The fortune increased by 1300 percent in twenty years... All their work, well compensated, but taken away from them. Because of you, they say..."

"Merlin." Fudge was sweating. How could he not have recognized someone that wealthy? That was more than the Malfoys, Notts, Greengrasses, and the Parkinsons combined. "Oh Merlin."

"Stop thinking of your campaigns, Cornelius. The goblins are out for blood. They've got copies of every treaty out looking for loopholes. They're going to make you pay..."

Cornelius began jotting notes on scrap paper. Everything he knew about goblins...which wasn't much. When he finally stopped 'thinking' he realized that his underling was making too much of the situation. The Minister waved his hand in a dismissive manner. "I think not, Dirk. They've rattled their chains every few years but nothing has ever come of it, save for dire threats."

Cresswell shook his head, disagreeing. "They've never lost a client this important before. Based on what I gleaned, Potter is arranging for the gnomes in Switzerland to take control of his asset management. And you know how goblins feel about gnomes..."

Actually, Cornelius didn't have the slightest clue. That was why he had people like Dirk around.

"Give them a week. They'll calm down again."

Dirk Cresswell just opened and closed his mouth a few times in utter amazement. Could someone be that stupid? It was obvious that Cornelius was no kind of scholar, but how could he be reading a political situation so poorly?

“It’s your head they’re looking for, Cornelius. Take the warning or not...”

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

His afternoon was worse. His office was flooded with Wizengamot members shouting about how their home mortgages were being called in – within a week’s time. The goblins were apparently under quite the financial strain to be recalling so many mortgages at the same time.

The strange thing that Cornelius didn’t notice was that only Wizengamot members complained about their mortgages being called in.

He didn’t give it much of a thought once he got home that evening. Harry Potter was neutralized. These blasted stories about a resurrected Dark Lord would dissipate like a horrible odor now.

Cornelius disrobed and relaxed in the large pool that came attached to the Ministerial House, the residence of the Minister of Magic. It really was the best perk of office, all things considered. A full staff of elves, a food budget that didn’t come out of Cornelius’ own pocket, and more rooms than he knew what to do with. Plus it was a short walk to the Ministry – should he ever deign to walk – and in a very nice part of London.

Cornelius lay on his back and floated around the massive pool. Mrs. Fudge was off seeing relatives – which, of course, was Cornelius’ explanation for why she was locked away inside a muggle sanitarium. It was much easier to be a dutiful husband when one’s wife wasn’t around much at all. Or never, as the case may be.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Tuesday would have been a good day...until that blasted meeting. Instead of a perfectly ordinary day slowly wandering past, most distressing news reached Cornelius' ears early in the morning as he was wrapping up with the Ambassador from Bulgaria.

It was the repugnant man's parting shot, actually, that ruined Cornelius' day. "I don't suppose you're too upset about your predecessor's disgrace, then, are you, Minister?"

Cornelius blinked a few times. "Excuse me?"

"Oh, an inquiry was held in France this morning over one of the people arrested and imprisoned during Minister Bagnold's term in office."

What an odd thing to say. The French were only concerned with wine and goat cheese...or enslaving wild veela. "Why would the French give one baguette about what we do here?"

"Well, it was necessary to grant someone citizenship, French citizenship..."

Cornelius rolled his eyes. He'd play along, though. "Whose?"

"Why, Sirius Black, of course..."

"Sirius Black is in France?" Fudge slammed his magical intercom. "Roselle? Maggie? Blast! Secretary, get me the French on a secure Floo connection. I'll get them to capture Sirius Black and extradite him back..."

The Ambassador just smiled. "I think you misunderstand, Minister. They held a trial for him in France because he never received one here in Britain before he was sent away. My sources tell me that they viewed Pensieve evidence stretching back to the 1981 Potter Massacre as well as more recent events. It appears that one Peter Pettigrew, who you all believe dead, was guilty. Even worse, he's still alive and was the servant partially responsible for resurrecting your resident Dark Lord..."

“What?”

“Oh, yes, it was quite the trial. Harry Potter showed his memory of the resurrection...”

Cornelius had a sinking feeling. Where Potter was trouble followed. “What? Why was Potter in France? And defending Sirius Black? And why did the French go along with it? Why? Why would they do that?”

“Well, it was part of the deal Potter struck to become a French citizen, I believe.”

“WHAT?”

The Bulgarian Ambassador just smiled. “Oh, yes, it was quite the bidding war. He’s accepted French, German, Bulgarian, American, Chinese, Japanese, Peruvian, and Egyptian citizenship, from what I hear. Don’t know if he’s renounced his British heritage yet. Haven’t heard where he’ll be going back to school – or maybe he’ll take tutors...”

“But...he. He was expelled from Hogwarts. He can’t go to school... He doesn’t have a wand.”

The Ambassador smiled his most patient smile, as if he were talking to a small child. “Surely you don’t think your provincial little school is the only one in the world. Or that no other country manufactures wands? Tut, tut, Minister. How many potions masters has England produced in the last decade? Three. How many has Peru created? Forty-eight. And the Peruvian test is much more challenging than the English version. Really, Minister, you’re not very well up to date on educational matters and methods, I think. I’ve heard about your plan to place Dolores at Hogwarts. In real schools, teachers are required to demonstrate their qualifications in the subjects they teach. Political connections are irrelevant.”

Cornelius was fuming now. His Ministry had just suffered a major publicity disaster; and he found out not from his own people, but from this damned Ambassador from a third-rate country.

Fudge thought about it all. Black proclaimed innocent. The man had spent more than a decade in Azkaban. Fudge himself had been among the first Ministry officials on the scene. He'd observed the maniacal gleam in Barty Crouch's eye. Oh Merlin; an innocent sent to prison without a trial. The reparations for that would be monumental.

But only if the government here ever admitted to it.

That was the great power of the politician. To know the truth, to fully understand it, and then to deny it to everyone at every time. 'Oh, yes, what a beautiful baby.' 'Of course we won't be raising taxes this year.' 'I'm sure your nephew would make a fine Unspeakable, ma'am, seems like quite a smart chap.'

Bleeck.

And the rest of his joy at Harry's disgrace the day before was gone. Obviously the international community had laughed at Fudge. Cornelius frowned as he tried to think through the consequences. Harry was accepted by other countries. He could go on and on telling his lies. And now the Ambassador from Bulgaria, of all places, was mocking Hogwarts. True, their potions instructor was a gnarled piece of a worthless wizard. But, it was the principle of the matter.

English is always best. Peruvian Potions Masters be damned.

And Voldemort was dead. And so was Pettigrew. Pensieves be damned. And no one could make Fudge admit otherwise. Not when his career and the Ministry's treasury was on the line. Admitting to wrongful imprisonment would be like writing a blank check to Sirius Black.

No way. Not while Cornelius Fudge was Minister of Magic!

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Wednesday was truly a date for the books. The books of torture and pain, of course. Cornelius Fudge's personal Malleus Maleficarum, the Hammer of Witches.

He felt like'd been buried alive. No worse, deprived of his daily tea and crumpets. The morning started off with a terrible revelation.

Cornelius Fudge did not have his tidy sack of galleons – his rather impressive weekly salary – sitting on his desk when he arrived.

“Bettina,” he called to his secretary, “or Amelinda or whatever you're called, why haven't the goblins made the payments yet?”

The shock white face of his secretary pushed into the doorframe. In a near whisper, she explained that “the goblins have seized the Ministry's money, sir.”

“WHAT!”

“Dirk Cresswell tried to floo you late last night, but you weren't answering. The goblins took the imprisoning of Sirius Black very badly, particularly once the French court proved his innocence. They said the Ministry violated a 1307 Treaty never to lie to the goblins...”

“But we didn't,” Fudge spluttered.

In just a few moments, Dirk Cresswell was in the room flushing out the full explanation. “Your predecessor, Minister Bagnold, sent a request to freeze the Black family assets after Black went to Azkaban. The goblins complied and the assets sat frozen for more than a decade. However, with proof of Black's innocence spreading in the press and internationally, the goblins have that letter of Bagnold's as proof that the goblins were lied to, sir.

“Why the hell would anyone sign something so stupid?”

“The seizure letter? Former Minister Bagnold is still among the living, I think, although Barty Crouch is no longer...”

“No, that blasted treaty...”

“Oh, I guess you never stayed awake for Professor Binns' lectures on the goblin rebellions. The rebellion that lasted from 1302 to 1307 was settled with a treaty that ensured the ‘good behavior’ of the Ministry

by forcing the Ministry to use the goblin bank as a deposit bank. And, for any lies or malfeasance, the goblins could seize the Ministry's assets. It was supposed to keep us honest, of course..."

Cornelius gritted his teeth. If there was anything he liked less than goblins it was ancient history...or dangerous treaties. "You never said – who was so stupid as to sign that?"

"Emerys Potter was Minister then, if I recall. But it was a clever move. He only moved seventy-five galleons, a tiny sort of fortune then, into the goblins' control. The rest he kept inside the Ministry's own vaults..."

"We have vaults in this building?" Cornelius would remember seeing something like that. He was sure of it.

Dirk shook his head. "No, that Ministry building had vaults, it was the building we used nearly seven hundred years ago. Several moves later and the wisdom of the ancients is forgotten, sir, because we let the goblins control all our assets. Very silly thing to do, I can say without a doubt."

"How was I supposed to know?" the Minister...err, whined. Not a very Ministerial thing, but the stress overwhelmed his sense of decorum. "I'm not a details person and was never very good with facts and history and such..."

"Really, sir, you think you'd be better versed in human nature – or goblin nature – than this. Ignorance isn't bliss; no, they scheme and plot and just when you get complacent they come around and bite you in your arse with their pointed little teeth. Not knowing the details can cost you a lot."

Fudge frowned. It had cost him his salary.

"Now, I've just been talking with our Revenue Department," Dirk said.

"We have a revenue department?" It really wasn't the Minister's day. No salary and so much new stuff to learn. "Is it staffed with

purebloods, do you know? I'd hate to have the other sort handling our money..."

Dirk rolled his eyes, but held his tongue. He was the other sort, after all, even if Fudge seemed to have forgotten. "Yes, we have one. I don't know about your other question, but they said that it will take weeks to establish a new account somewhere – we're rather a laughing stock internationally right now – and even longer to end the agreements that automatically deposit tax revenue into the Gringotts account. When they were set up, we apparently aimed for long-term stability. The penalty clauses are quite nasty, I've heard. We won't have a galleon to call the Ministry's for almost a month..."

A month without his bag of gold? How would Fudge survive?

Cresswell ignored Cornelius' near fainting. He had a lot of problems to outline quickly. "We don't know if the goblins have merely seized our money – or if they've claimed it for themselves."

"They can do that?"

"Apparently." Cresswell wondered if Fudge's loving parents had also been loving siblings to each other. Most likely...

"This is a state secret, then. No one must ever know about this..."

"The goblins held a press conference at five fifteen this morning, Minister. It may even be in today's newspapers..."

"Great Merlin."

"Black's innocence, sir, puts us in a bind. The French have recognized it; the goblins, too. But the Ministry hasn't said a word, yet..."

No, no. No way. Fudge had already decided that. Downplay. Deny. Delay! The three D's of political success. "Pshaw..."

"But it's all because of that Potter trial, sir. They didn't start digging out the old treaties until they lost ten percent of their assets. You've

got to set things right with the goblins, sir, and that probably starts with convincing Harry Potter to come back; him and his wealth...”

Fudge frowned. “Leave the political thinking to me, Dirk, that’s why I’m in this chair and you’re not...”

He'd have to think up another way to repair things. Admitting the truth -- or apologizing -- were never paths to success, only to Azkaban.

Dirk smiled and stood up. “Of course, sir.”

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

His mid-morning tea was interrupted several times – which wasn’t that great a loss, as Fudge was finding it difficult to digest much of anything, given he was without his bag of gold today.

First, the French Ambassador snickered when he showed up to deliver a letter to Fudge.

Said letter was a strongly worded refusal to turn over Sirius Black to “the bunged-up system that you unfortunately refer to as justice.” The letter had wonderful things to say about their “ability to deny even the most basic of sham trials by not awarding any trial at all” and the ridiculousness of a law enforcement organization headed up by a “man who was proven to have broken his own Death Eater son out of your prison system, keeping said son under the Imperius curse for more than a decade.”

It concluded with an admonition that turned Fudge's frail stomach into a roiling storm. “Fix your ‘system of justice’ so that it is less wobbly than a broken-down wheel barrow and we might discuss judicial matters with you again, Minister, but until then, consider all treaties between Magical France and Magical Britain in suspension...”

Fudge was a rather vibrant orange-red while he bellowed out his anger. “I’ve never been treated so disrespectfully...”

“With all due honesty, sir, you’ve obviously never deserved it more.”

With that, the French Ambassador left.

And just when Fudge was calming down, the Daily Prophet arrived.

Black Innocent; Never Granted British Trial; The French Cleaning Up Our Messes For Us, was one headline on a very busy page.

Harry Potter Awarded Citizenship in Eighteen Countries, Rejects Returning to Britain, was another.

Goblins Invoke Ancient Treaty to Seize Ministry Assets, was a third.

Oh, how Fudge longed to go take a long float in his pool. But, no, he had work to do. Important work. He'd fulfill his full duty by remaining in his office from nine thirty to four o'clock every working day, save holidays, and excepting his daily hour and a half allowance for lunch. Plus his two sessions of tea, midmorning and midafternoon.

He'd work today even though he hadn't received his bag of galleons. But he'd take a double-length float tonight.

His annoyance went up when he got a shirty visit from Britain's representative to the European Magical Union, one of the component organizations in the International Confederation of Warlocks.

The representative warned him, "if there's just one more screw-up, Fudge, the EMU will vote to assume the right to supervise your government, every aspect of it. They're not at all pleased that the goblins are in an uproar, that your judicial foibles are making international headlines. Even the role of Dementors at Azkaban is making the British look terrible. However, they're rather glad to have Harry Potter taking a more visible role in the world..."

"WHAT!"

"Oh, yes, he's on an ICW world tour right now investigating educational models. He's been stopping by every school of magic in the world, technically as an advisor of sorts. But I think he's trying to pick one to attend in a few weeks..."

“But what school would want someone who was expelled from Hogwarts?” As if the answer should be obvious. Hogwarts was British and therefore the best – the only one worthy of emulation in any respect. If it rejected a student, at the request of its parent government, the student deserved rejection from all the subservient schools.

The representative raised an eyebrow. “Apparently all of them, Cornelius. All of them.”

After that boor of a man left, Cornelius tried to resuscitate his cold tea and warm jam and clotted cream. But he received a summons – he, the Minister of Magic – received a summons from the British Muggle Prime Minister.

So Fudge floo'd into the Muggle Prime Minister's office. And got a rather withering dressing down.

“I just got off the telephone with the American President. And he made some rather surprising claims about his magical citizenry growing in quality and ours declining in quality. And I've gotten other calls this morning from France, Peru, and Bulgaria of all places. Bulgaria! What the devil are you mucking up now, Fudge?”

“Nothing, sir.”

“Well, then, I suppose you'd like to tell me why the French President's office has just sent over a proclamation announcing the innocence of one Sirius Black? Wasn't he the one you had us help you track down the summer before last year? And now the French say he's completely innocent, was framed up, of all things, and even sent to prison without a trial. WITHOUT A TRIAL! If there were no trials, Cornelius, then there would be no lawyers. You can't have a government -- or a Prime Minister -- without lawyers! They go together like a pig and his parasites. I am most upset about this, Fudge...”

So Fudge started in on a highly abbreviated explanation. He did happen to mention the name Harry Potter. And that's when things started to go very wrong.

“Potter, you say? Harold James Potter? According to another proclamation from the French President’s office, he was just made Chevalier in the French Legion of Honor. If he was British and this important, why didn’t we knight him or something? Makes us look boorish you know, Fudge... I won’t be shown up by the French, you hear.”

The Prime Minister began to seethe. On television he looked quite friendly, but in person he was quite a different sort of animal if you angered him.

“I let you get away with all too much, Fudge. You just show up here whenever you like and tell me half truths and partial lies when you need to wheedle something out of me. Well, no longer. Get this Harry Potter back on his native soil and I will have the Queen knight him – no, I’ll have her ennoble the young lad, even better. Or we can discuss your resignation and next career. I believe the Queen might be in need of a court jester, you see, and you rather seem to fit the bill with your general portliness and level of incompetence. We’d just need to round up a patchwork suit and some pointy shoes, I wager.”

Cornelius couldn't get away fast enough. He needed a good long float...long enough to make his skin go prune-like. His asylum-condoned wife had warned him there'd be days like this...which was why he'd had her committed.

Blast!

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Dumbledore showed up in Fudge’s office that afternoon. He would be fifty-seventh member of the Wizengamot to show up that day to complain about a lack of salary.

Fudge tried to stop him before he got started. “I know all about the goblins, Albus. I’m trying to get our account unfrozen, you see. I don’t need you breathing down my neck, too. Won’t help things.”

Albus didn't listen. He walked right in. And Howlers for Cornelius Fudge seemed to follow the aged wizard inside, too. Because they started exploding right then. His chairs were upended. His desk was thrown back into the wall. And Fudge sat up, from his new home on the floor, a few moments later wondering what had happened.

"I've already had four dozen howlers today, Cornelius. The ones that tagged along with me were your share, apparently."

His delicate stomach couldn't take much more in the surprise department. "What nonsense is this, Dumbledore?"

"Remember when I told you it was a bad idea to try Harry Potter as an adult for your vendetta?"

A weary Cornelius just nodded.

"Well, it seems the Wizengamot's ruling throwing Potter out also ended a rather useful institution that the Potter family started up four hundred years ago, you blithering fool."

Just then an owl showed up with two steaming red envelopes. Dumbledore took one – his hand looked like it had been scorched more than once this morning – and Fudge cowered over the other. Dumbledore went first.

"HOW DARE YOU RAISE THE TUITION AT HOGWARTS BY TWO HUNDRED PERCENT, ALBUS! I STILL REMEMBER YOU AS A BOY GETTING INTO TROUBLE WITH ABERFORTH AND HIS GOATS! MY GREAT GRANDCHILDREN WILL PROBABLY NOT BE ABLE TO AFFORD TO ATTEND YOUR SCHOOL NOW BECAUSE OF THIS! JUST WATCH OUT, A GREAT GRANDMOTHER WILL PROTECT HER CHILDREN'S CHILDREN'S CHILDREN WITH EVERY OUNCE OF STRENGTH. – MARCHBANKS"

Fudge's was similar, but even harsher. In particular because Griselda Marchbanks was on the Wizengamot and had sussed out what Fudge had been up to with the Potter boy.

Cornelius dusted the soot off after the letter exploded in indignation. "Well, Dumbledore, why did you increase tuition, then? And why am I being blamed for it?"

"Don't you listen to anything anyone says, Cornelius? You're trying to take over my school with your vicious little toad, Umbridge, and you don't know the first thing about the place. Let me tell you, then. Apparently the Potters set up a financial trust hundreds of years ago to help defray massive portions of the tuition for Hogwarts. The Potter Family Education Trust dissolved the moment you threw the last Potter out of Hogwarts, the money was released back to him. He hasn't withdrawn it yet from Gringotts, but he will. And then the goblins will come for you with all their warriors. That trust was large enough to pay forty-five percent of all the bills for Hogwarts – teachers, food, our rent on the lands, all that – which is more than triple of how much the Ministry supports us. So, that money gone, we had to raise the tuition."

Cornelius was beginning to feel nervous now. The goblins would get angrier, that could be handled. But parents feeling this kind of punch in their pocket books – every political bone in his body said that Cornelius would be paying for this for a long time to come. He would get the blame, particularly once the story behind this trust dissolving hit the newspapers.

"What do we do, Albus?"

"The trust is gone, Cornelius, because you broke its fundamental tenet. 'Every child will be treated in a fair, equitable manner, with all disciplinary issues handled by the Hogwarts Board of Governors.' You broke that magical contract with your criminal trial on a trumped up charge. Harry, even if he came back, doesn't have to reinstate it. You're going to feel the full brunt of it."

"We've got to keep it quiet, then. Quell the rumors, Albus."

The aged warlock just shook his head. "I've already had to send out the tuition increase letters after someone managed to start this as gossip going round the families. It's not gossip, of course, if it's true; and I've fully explained why in that letter, Cornelius. So, unless the

Ministry can come up with another two million galleons per year for Hogwarts, the Fudge tuition increase will stand.”

Cornelius had a minor seizure while Dumbledore stalked out of his office. One of the great political truths was that most citizens only cared what a government did if it impacted their money bags. And this travesty of a broken magical contract was going to ripple down into nearly every family – and certainly all of the great, powerful ones – by the end of the week. It was not a good day to be Minister.

Fudge brooded. He got none of the credit; all of the blame. If this kept up, even his house elves would be laughing at him soon.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Cornelius Fudge had a rough start to his Thursday morning, too. Of course, he hadn’t slept well over night, not with all the letters and Howlers that managed to locate him at home. The vile things people could say in a letter! He hadn’t heard such language since he got kicked out of that whorehouse in Turkey.

The problem on Thursday morning was that he couldn’t Floo into his office for some bizarre reason. Nor into the Auror department. Nor anywhere else, not even the Atrium.

So he actually walked to work. And in the alley near the phone box, there were a great number of Ministry employees milling about. Albertus Librus, the Ministry’s chief historian, was the first to come up to Fudge.

“Minister, I hate to be the bearer of bad news. But, I guess I am.”

Cornelius had no clue what could be wrong now. Was there anything left to break? “What now? More goblins? More magical contracts I didn’t know about going kaboom?”

Albertus looked surprised. “Why, yes, a magical contract, how did you know? Perhaps you’re cleverer than people give you credit for, Minister.”

Fudge scowled.

“Or maybe not. The founding of the Ministry goes way back to when eleven families signed a treaty among themselves twelve hundred years ago – that established the precursor to the Wizengamot. Well, it seems that every subsequent set of laws on governance kept reinforcing that original compact, ‘The Treaty of the Eleven Families.’ Well, the problem with that is only two of those families are still around, you see. The Whites died out five hundred years ago; the magical lines of the Turners and the Cobblers have been extinct for two hundred years or better. And then there’s...”

“Yes. Yes, get on with it.”

“Well, it’s just down to the Potters and the Blacks. And both of those families just suspended their family’s magics that support that original treaty...”

Cornelius shrugged.

“We’re locked out, sir. The magic is suspended. We don’t have a government any more, well, not until some folks from the European Magical Union show up to start running things...”

“WHAT! I’m the Minister of Magic.”

“There is no Ministry of Magic, sir. Nor any Wizengamot. Nor anything right now. Everything’s suspended. Those original eleven families agreed to protect the country from unjust government. They were authorized in that original treaty to withdraw the support of their family’s magics when the government showed itself corrupt or otherwise unfit to govern...”

Fudge ranted and raved for quite a long time, all the while checking in with the others assembled there trying to see if there was more information – meaning, positive information – available.

After an hour of trying to get into his Ministry, Fudge told everyone to go home for the day. He needed a float in his pool to calm himself.

How do these things keep happening to him? It was an awful curse, Cornelius decided. Potter was involved and thus it was bad news.

He arrived back at the Ministerial House just in time to have a nice float. He'd worked up rather a fine sheen of sweat on his face with all his exertion. But the door was utterly sealed. The gardens seemed to have wards around them so he couldn't enter from the rear of the building, either. He tried opening a window – and merely got an unpleasant magical shock for his efforts.

“What now!”

He saw a small bronze plaque on his house. He'd noticed it before, but it had never seemed as well polished as it did today. Cornelius wandered over to the plaque and read it.

“Ministry House, loaned to the Wizengamot and Ministry of Magic in 1629 as a reward for excellent governance, from the House of Potter, Most Ancient and Noble, Servants to the Light.”

Cornelius groaned. No Ministry meant no Ministerial House. No house elves! No floating in the pool!! What else could go wrong?

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

The answer, of course, was quite a lot.

Lord Voldemort started up a subscription to the Daily Prophet – not under his own name, of course, but rather as Peter Riddle, as a sort of sop to that vile servant Peter Pettigrew – and read the news for the entire week. He was enraged when saw that his quarry - Harry Potter - for getting that blasted prophecy out of the Ministry of Magic had left Britain.

Nothing made Lord Voldemort more upset than having fools meddle in his plans. He needed Potter here. Voldemort couldn't storm the Ministry for the prophecy and still maintain his low profile. No, he needed Potter back in Britain.

He decided to send a message of sorts, a peace offering to Potter and a warning to those fools in the Wizengamot. Potter was his! His!

Who would he plot against if there was no Potter in Britain?

The boy needed to be at Hogwarts, where he was easy to get at. He was critical to all of Voldemort's half-formed plans. In the current one, he needed to stage an elaborate, convoluted plot to get at that blasted prophecy, for which he conveniently would require the services of one Harry Potter.

Ultimate Plan #3122-B. Step one. Retrieve Potter. Step two. Retrieve prophecy. Step three. Take over the world.

In his most giving and gracious spirit, Lord Voldemort wrote up a list, after consulting "Peter Riddle's" copy of the Daily Prophet. He pointed his rather scaly finger at 'his most faithful' servant. "Wormtail, I want these twenty-three people to die gruesome, yet still accidental deaths over the next two days. Take Mulciber, Malfoy, and Snape. Do not fail me."

Quite a few Wizengamot members – and only ones who'd voted to convict Harry Potter – found themselves quite dead in the following days. One swallowed a massive, whole radish and choked to death. Another managed to blow himself up while preparing a burn salve. A third indulged in too much Firewhiskey and ended up throwing himself off the tallest building in Knockturn Alley. A fourth was run over, several times, by a muggle lorry. A fifth mistook a preparation of quick drying cement for his favorite kind of hummus. A sixth was mauled by a feral puffskein. A seventh was boorish and rude to every goblin in Gringotts and conveniently fell to his death when he attempted to visit his vault. The eighth, well, you get the idea.

The sad part was that Harry Potter wasn't taking the Daily Prophet any longer, so he didn't see any of the results of Lord Voldemort's rather gruesome – and misplaced – peace offering. No, rather, the papers came out and announced that Harry Potter had just purchased a chateau in one of the wine producing regions of France and planned to produce under the label Chateau d'Chevalier Magie. The House of the Magical Knight.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Friday was a very bad day. Cornelius started getting reports that many of his supporters in the Wizengamot had died in gruesome, yet still accidental ways. “How is it possible for someone to drown in an inch of butterbeer? Or for someone to accidentally light themselves on fire? And is it possible for someone to consume four kilos of pure lard and die of a burst stomach?”

Fudge shrugged. He was seated in a rather uncomfortable room in the Leaky Cauldron since he still hadn’t determined how to get inside his Ministerial House.

The Daily Prophet arrived. The story on the front page was just what Cornelius expected. The Ministry was shuttered. It wasn’t until he dug into the inner pages that Cornelius saw two headlines that infuriated him.

“Death Eaters Found Among Former Ministry Officials, EMU Officials Say.”

Cornelius scowled as he 1) thought about how those blasted European Magical Union officials were mucking around in his affairs and 2) wondered exactly why McNair, Rookwood, Edgecomb, and a whole slew of others had been apprehended. Assuming that one had acted under the Imperius Curse in the first war, why would he or she keep a set of Death Eater robes in their homes? Didn’t make sense, did it? Bah, it was all another lie of some sort.

And then, buried in a tiny article on page seven: “Potter House for the Ministry to be Donated as Magical Orphanage.”

The more Fudge read, the madder he became. It was obvious that Potter meant to give his house – err, the Minister’s house – to some blasted Magical Orphanage. No sprogs could enjoy floating in his pool as much as he could.

This had to end; this Potter – and those goblins with their blasted treaties – was a menace. Fudge was a laughing stock. None of the

other Ministers even deigned to recognize him any longer. “Sorry, Britain is without a magical government at present, my sources tell me. Couldn’t have happened to a more inept regime, I’d say.” That was the American response.

Blast! Double blast!

Without the ancient magics supporting the Ministry – even its wards were tied to those magics – the Aurors couldn’t surveil for crimes, nor the Floo system operate, nor anyone legally negotiate with the other species. And Black and Potter had suspended the magics – not revoked them, allowing for another compact to be hammered out – the crafty bastards. Two expatriots, one a convicted criminal, although increasingly, it seems, innocent of his crimes, controlled the fate of magical Britain.

And no one...NO ONE AT ALL...was looking at Fudge to fix it. No, they were placing the blame on Fudge and looking to Potter and Black to come back and set things right.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Cornelius was eating a rather bland steak and kidney pie for lunch at the Leaky Cauldron when the next set of whispers blasted through the place.

“...why I’ve never. Been declared international pariahs, have we? Can’t get out of Britain to visit any other countries, can we? What kind of ineptitude has caused this? And who do we blame?”

Cornelius tried to sneak back to his room on the third floor. But more than one angry mob found him before he was safely ensconced in his single room, shared bath accommodations.

Oh, how far the mighty - self-deluded as they might be - can fall!

It took Cornelius just about all the magic he had in his reserves to apply healing spells to his bruises and rather crooked nose. Apparently magical people did not enjoy having their travel plans disrupted because of petty games played at the Ministry of Magic.

Nor did they particularly enjoy the EMU checking every home in wizarding Britain for evidence of Death Eaters and dark relics.

Some days it was a bad thing to be the lead “persona non grata” within a nation. Even the floo was stopped up now; Cornelius couldn’t even whine to his old friends in Papua New Guinea or Outer Mongolia.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

The arrests of nearly everyone in senior leadership positions in the Ministry – and on the Wizengamot – started that afternoon. The Death Eaters inside Azkaban – and a number who were outside of it – were also taken to EMU jails in undisclosed locations.

Dolores Umbridge had an enchanting visit with EMU officials who objected to a number of her family’s heirlooms. “It’s against EMU treaties to possess blood quills, madam, and you seem to have seven.”

A smile creased the fat rolls on her obese face. “We’re grandfathered in, you peasant. All pureblood practices are grandfathered in within magical Britain, you heathen. I wrote some of the damned laws myself.”

The EMU official just smiled, placed the toad-like woman into magical restraints, and then proceeded to tear her home apart, stick from stick. It was a profitable exercise. She had a number of horrifying things hidden well out of sight, things no ‘pureblood grandfathering’ would ever be able to explain. In any case the EMU did not recognize grandfathering of any sort. A thing was legal or it wasn’t. Period. Instruments of torture – illegal.

Hogwarts lost its Potions Master, even over the strenuous objections of the Hogwarts Headmaster. “But I trust him, you see. I trust him.”

“Very good, sir. Then you can apply for a permit to come and visit him, too. We’ve gotten Pensieve testimony that Snape has cast all three of the Unforgivable Curses banned under EMU treaties. He’s

responsible for the deaths of more than a few witches and wizards, sir.”

“But Severus Snape is no more a Death Eater than I am.”

“I guess we’ll have to go over your life more carefully then, sir. We had thought you were fairly clean. I’ll flag you for extra scrutiny.”

Cornelius lost his own freedom late that afternoon, just as he was about to go downstairs to get some dinner. Maybe there’d be some treacle tart for dessert. Yum.

But the EMU agents snagged him on the way down.

“Not a very smart politician, are you? Taking bribes in terribly obvious way. Paying them out in even more ridiculous ways. Well, at least we’ll give you a fair trial. Oh, and we’ve recovered your wife out of the sanitarium you stuck her in. She had a number of things to say about you. She was even kind enough to request bank statements from the goblins concerning you. Very helpful lady. A bit angry, I’d say, but very helpful.”

Cornelius gulped. He was screwed.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

The Daily Prophet had to expand the paper’s size over the weekend. Seven Aurors arrested for being Dark Lord sympathizers. A full listing of the corruption, bribery, and ineptitude of the Fudge Administration. And, finally, a sighting of Lord Voldemort himself as he was trying to break into the Ministry of Magic.

A beautiful photograph of a no-nosed, scaly bastard.

That had wizarding Britain in an uproar. He killed more than one Wizengamot member as they were mingling around near the telephone box at ground level. He disappeared, cursing about “Harry Potter not returning to stop him” and “that blasted prophecy.”

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

On Monday, things were basically back to normal. Well, with a couple of exceptions.

First, the Potters and the Blacks reinstated the ancient treaty establishing the Ministry of Magic. The EMU awarded Sirius Black reparations of seventy-two million galleons from the Ministry coffers, improbably almost the exact amount of money that the goblins had impounded at Gringotts – as a way to send a stern and unforgettable message to future rulers. And then, as Cornelius was awaiting trial before a three judge panel for his corruption, the EMU nominated an Interim Minister: Sirius Black.

So, it was a newly wealthy, cleaned up Sirius Black who came to look at the Ministry. Most of its senior leadership was arrested, awaiting trial on hundreds of different charges. Only Amelia Bones, Amos Diggory, Dirk Cresswell, and Arthur Weasley were still around of the department heads. The entire Floo department was gone. The Misuse of Magic Office was gutted, too. The people who'd been taking bribes to persecute the centaurs were under arrest. And the goons in the Committee on Experimental Charms were already sentenced to EMU prison.

The EMU had done a rough cut of the major problems. So Sirius set about setting the smaller things right.

First, he ordered the Aurors to round up all the Dementors and sink them into the ocean.

Second, he unveiled a proclamation revoking nearly every law ever passed by the Wizengamot, particularly anything that had to do with pureblood grandfathering.

Third, he modified, with Harry Potter's agreement, the original treaty. The Wizengamot was now an elected body, rather than a hereditary one. Sirius ordered elections in three weeks. And the creation of an independent judiciary!

Fourth, Sirius adjourned and took the press with him to Azkaban...where he used a combination of spells and muggle explosives to detonate the place.

It was a rather wonderful Monday.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Harry Potter, in between all of his private lessons preparing him for his OWL and NEWT exams, learned to bottle wine. The very first bottle of Chateau d' Chevalier Magie was very special. He sent it to a special person.

Lord Voldemort opened the door to the small, secluded house where he was staying and saw the gift basket on the stoop. The envelope was addressed to the dead former occupants, so Voldemort felt confident about stealing this little item, too. (Too bad he was far too arrogant to believe that the muggle milkman, the smart aleck paper delivery boy, and the squib utility repair man had all turned him in...which is how the French learned of him -- they had better spies than the English had spy hunters -- and thus how Harry learned of his whereabouts.)

There were cheeses, meats, and a fine bottle of a red French wine. He ordered Wormtail to drink it first. "It's good, my lord. Strong tannins."

Voldemort smirked. Wormtail wouldn't know good wine if it bit him in the arse. However, he was Voldemort's last unimprisoned Death Eater. So Voldemort had to trust the rat a little bit.

Voldemort took a sip. Good. He pulled back more into his mouth and mulled over the flavors. It was very tannic, a new bottle, very young. But with undertones Lord Voldemort had never tasted before.

Pears, earth, something metallic perhaps? And something a bit like a basilisk... WHAT!

Acromantula venom, too. And Dementor blood. Voldemort knew he was frozen. He could barely open his eyes to look for Wormtail, but

the rat was already convulsing on the ground. He looked like something attacked by Dementors, dragons, acromantulas, basilisks, manticores, and nundus. It was horrible to look at. Voldemort knew it was attacking him, too.

Voldemort felt inside his magic. He was looking for the tethers between him and his horcruxes. But he couldn't feel them. If he wasn't tethered, when he died, the horcrux wouldn't bind him to the earth. No, his precious treasures weren't going to work. Something in that wine was killing him; another thing was binding his magic; and something else entirely seemed to be shredding at his very soul. What magic could do this?

Voldemort expired. His body remained behind. He did not flutter off in his spirit form to possess another person or perhaps a little animal of some sort. No, Voldemort just died, as a mortal would.

And thus did Lord Voldemort die by Harry Potter's hand.

Harry had mixed a small amount of fermented wine with every poison and foul thing he could order by owl post. And when he'd tossed it all together, and added a little heat, it actually smelled a bit like red wine. But it was the most deadly colloidal suspension ever created – bloods of every foul beast, poisons from the most lethal sources, and a touch of the old vine.

He kept another ten bottles of the Chateau d'Chevalier Magie – Special Bottling on hand for extraordinary circumstances. The Normal Bottling, as the nonlethal stock was named, sold quite well in boutique wine stores throughout France and beyond.

And, in his mind, Harry Potter was actually just a bit thankful for how stupid, venal, and deluded Cornelius Fudge had been. Harry actually enjoyed his life now. Enjoyed it quite a lot. Too bad the Wizengamot had had such a rough week of it. Oh well, Sirius would enjoy shaking things up a bit as Interim Minister, Harry knew.

Harry sipped at a glass of the Normal Bottling. Quite nice. Pears, earthy, maybe an undertone of chocolate, too. Pure heaven.

Padfoot's Proclamations

A/N: Just some more miscellany to tack onto the end of the one-shot A Bad Week at the Wizengamot. Enjoy some Sirius-themed mayhem.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Sirius Black walked into his Ministry of Magic on his second day of being Interim Minister. He didn't intend to stay all that long – just long enough to inject some humor back into Britain and fix up a number of problems.

He settled into his new office and reviewed the previous day. Azkaban destroyed, check. Dementors gone, check. The hint of responsible governance reintroduced into Britain, check. Day one had been a success.

He looked at the list he and Harry had compiled after the European Magical Union asked Sirius to step in as Interim Minister. The first item was rather severe.

Issue #1: The Ministry Is Broke

In part, this was Sirius' problem because he'd been awarded all of the Ministry's former monetary assets as a settlement for wrongful imprisonment. So, it was only right that Sirius set it right. However, Sirius wasn't giving it back. He had plans for it. Oh yes, that many galleons could create a truly impressive mud wrestling arena – and pay for many, many beautiful witches to compete. Oh yes.

Still, the Ministry was broke. Now... how to raise money quickly? Hmm...

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Ministerial Proclamation #6172

Issued by Sirius Black, Interim Minister

Cursed Object Amnesty Offered

For the next two weeks, any person may turn over a dark or cursed object for disposal and destruction to the Auror Office. Each object will cost 100 galleons for disposal. After the end of the amnesty, Aurors will be conducting raids on wizarding families to confiscate and fine for the possession of dark and cursed objects. The minimum fine levied will be 50,000 galleons per object.

Dark or cursed objects include blood quills, assassination rings or medallions, poisoned pens, soul magic containers of any variety, enchanted Singing Elmo dolls, and bottles of hair products designed to make men look like slicked-back veela...

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

There we go, Sirius thought. Malfoys and the like have been renting influence from the Ministry for years – now let them outright pay for the Ministry's operations for the next few months or longer. The Gringotts goblins would, of course, be more than willing to decimate the fortunes of families who'd long helped oppress and eviscerate goblin rights.

Purebloods finally paying for the government they corrupted and abused, check.

A week after the proclamation went out, Sirius watched as a number of dark and neutral family heads began trundling into the Ministry with sacks and boxes of objects. Success! Even better was the fact that the wealthiest and nastiest families were currently in EMU custody and would, thus, not be free to turn in their dark or cursed items. The Aurors would have a fun and easy time replenishing the Ministry's coffers in a few weeks. By then, the Ministry's normal revenue sources should be back in line, too, especially if the goblins decided to start cooperating again.

Sirius smiled. He'd already brought in three boxes of his family's treasured objects and paid his own fines. It was nice to be an upstanding member of society – well, at least until he decide to have some fun with his dwindling days in office.

He walked slowly back to his office, stopping to chat with a fair number of the people who worked here. Especially the younger, prettier staff members. Moving on, spotting blonde bombshell, stopping, perving. Talking, talking, shaking head. Feeling his brains melt out of his head. Walking away. Feeling stupider with every single step. Running away, quickly. Locking office door behind him, hiding behind massive desk.

Scared out of his wits, check! Proof that stupidity was both catching and hereditary at the same time, check.

Wow! Such a pretty, vapid woman. Had to be some kind of intellectual succubus. Draining out the brains of other folks. That very pretty blonde witch kept calling him 'Mister Slanderous Black.' And she seemed to be sincere in the nice things she said about good ol' 'Slanderous' who was simultaneously in her reckoning an unrepentant Death Eater, the present Minister of Magic, the world's leading magical carpet salesperson, a disguised Stubby Boardman, and a golem fashioned from bleu cheese. She obviously wasn't smart enough to tie her own shoe laces.

The last thing Sirius needed – aside from another dozen years rooming with Dementors – was an illegitimate child fathered on a moron. The Black line needed to be strong, moral, and brilliant. Yes, especially the last part. No dumb witches.

He set to work on his next problem. Issue #2: The Ministry is Filled with Imbeciles

The stupid corrupt ones and the evil sort had been arrested by the EMU. But they'd left behind the merely stupid ones. Pretty witches working in the Ministry were a good thing, but dumb witches working in the hub of government was a recipe for disaster.

What to do? Well, be like a Black – be sneaky, flattering, and ruthless...

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Ministerial Proclamation #6173

Issued by Sirius Black, Interim Minister

Good Governance Initiative

Per the recent recommendations of the European Magical Union on good governance, the Ministry of Magic will begin conducting magical aptitude and professional skills testing for every non-elective position – for current and future prospective employees. Successful completion of the testing is required for continued employment by the Ministry; exceptional results will help determine who fills the recently vacated positions throughout the Ministry. All testing will be completed by September 1.

In the future, no employee may be hired without successful completion of these examinations.

Bonus points will be awarded to anyone who can successfully prank their examination proctor during the exam.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Ministerial Proclamation #6174

Issued by Sirius Black, Interim Minister

Employee Referral Initiative

Given the large number of vacancies caused by the recent EMU arrests, we will need to quickly fill a number of positions. While we expect most senior positions to be filled internally, new entry- and mid-level positions will open up throughout the Ministry. To reward your assistance, the Ministry will pay you a monetary reward for anyone you recommend and who is hired by the Ministry (contingent upon successful completion of hiring examinations).

Reward: 100 galleons per position, plus any bonus amounts (see below).

Bonuses: Additional 100 galleons for successful Auror and Unspeakable candidates. Additional 300 galleons for those who have completed three or more years of service in a foreign Ministry of Magic. Additional 500 galleons for those who have 1) been a PlayWizard model, 2) served on the Swedish Women's Quidditch Team, or 3) are one-eighth or more Veela.

(Yes, an experienced French veela Auror would be eligible for a cumulative 1000 galleon referral fee. Get cracking!)

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Sirius walked into work a week after his latest proclamations – the blonde moron from the fourth level was gone and the entire place was filled with new job applicants. Many of them female. Many of them smarter than a flobberworm. Many of them quite easy on the eyes.

Yes, much better.

He mingled in and among the new applicants for a good long while before heading up to his office. He had more mayhem to unleash today, of course, but he also needed to set up some dates for the coming days and weeks. False imprisonment was absolutely lonely work. Veronique for Tuesday; Marjorie for Wednesday; Callista for Thursday; and the sisters Juno and Demeter for Friday and Saturday, respectively.

In truth, Sirius had to improve on his godson's recent revelation. Harry had allowed a pack of veela to move into his chateau. An entire pack! The boy had also revealed that he was immune to their charms; just like shrugging off an Imperius. Woof! Woof!

Insane jealousy for his stud of a godson, check.

The story hadn't hit the Prophet yet, but it was sure to. So, Sirius had work and work to do in the intervening days. Five dates in five days with five women wasn't equal to an entire pack of veela; but it was good to get one's sea legs back before jumping in whole body into the challenge.

A pack of veela. Sirius cleaned up a spot of drool on the corner of his mouth. A whole pack.

Politely asking godson to teach an old dog new tricks, check.

He sat down at his desk and looked at his third memorandum.

Issue #3: Pureblood bigots and idiots are already planning to retake the government.

Hmm. What to do? Sirius smiled then and began to jot down some notes. The world would soon understand what a Marauder could do with high political office.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Ministerial Proclamation #6178

Issued by Sirius Black, Interim Minister

Ministerial Voting Rights

Starting today, the Ministry of Magic is rededicating itself to protecting all of the magical users inside Britain. Henceforth, all witches, wizards, squibs, and sentient magical creatures will be permitted to vote. Starting next year, the Minister of Magic and all seats on the Wizengamot will be fully elective positions. At that election, all entitled entities will be permitted to vote. Special voting stations will be set up to ensure each race has equal access to the polls.

As of this time, sentient magical creatures include merfolk, centaurs, house elves, goblins, werewolves, vampires, Crumple-Horned Snorkacks...

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Ministerial Proclamation #6179

Issued by Sirius Black, Interim Minister

Revised Procedure for Filling Wizengamot Seats

To speed up the process of filling the recently vacated Wizengamot seats, the Ministry is publicly disseminating the process. A minimum of ten percent of the vacant seats are reserved for non-human creatures. All applicants will be required to fill out a brief questionnaire. Finalists will be invited to an interview with the Minister of Magic. All Wizengamot members will be appointed to serve until the next election early next year.

At the beginning of next year (date to be announced), all Wizengamot seats will be open for direct election. All persons and creatures over the age of seventeen who have not been convicted of felonious conduct will be permitted to stand for election at that time.

The forty seats will be divided up into districts: Hogsmeade residents will be able to fill four; residents of the Black Lake, one; residents of the Forbidden Forest, three; near-permanent residents of Hogwarts Castle, five (at least three for house elves); Godric's Hollow, three; Ottery St. Catchpole, two; London-area and Diagon Alley residents, thirteen (at least two for goblins; two for house elves); and all other territories within Britain will be divided up equally population-wise through the last census and permitted a single representative. The final listing of districts will be published not less than two months before the election.

Seats vacated during a term of office will be filled by appointment of the Minister of Magic until the next scheduled election, at which point all seats become vacant again. Elections will be scheduled, at the Minister's discretion, at least every three years, if not more frequently. Elections need to be announced forty-five days before they are to occur.

For Reference: Wizengamot Nomination Questionnaire:

Name:

Address:

Species:

Beliefs:

Identify your top five goals in the next year as a prospective member of the Wizengamot:

Identify your three top political heroes (do not cite Merlin, please):

Describe three political villains of recent history and explain why you would so name them (your thoughts on Voldemort and Severus Snape, in particular, are welcome):

What are your opinions regarding wizarding blood status (feel free to burn your application if you're tempted to write down the word 'mudblood'):

Explain your judicial philosophy:

You are hearing a case of official bribery of a Wizengamot member (where the evidence clearly shows the person's guilt), how do you react and what punishment, if any, do you think appropriate:

Actions:

Identify any felonies you've been convicted of committing (if any, feel free to burn your application):

Identify the steps you took once Voldemort's return was made public (if your action was to don a mask, please present yourself to the Auror office for a special early interview):

Identify the ways in which you and your family earn money, include investment income and list the investments (if more than ten percent comes from extortion, embezzlement, bribery, or other like tactics, please present your completed application to the Aurors' Office):

Describe the five actions you've undertaken in the last ten years that you're most proud of:

Describe the five actions through your life you're least proud of:

Note: The actual parchment for submitting an application is charmed for truthfulness. Writing down any lies or evasions and the parchment will turn completely black and invalidate your application.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Sirius Black received at least fifty Howlers per day for two solid weeks after he made those proclamations public. The Prophet was screaming for his head.

Pissing off the world, check.

Oh, it was wonderful. Non-humans on the Wizengamots. Goblins and centaurs voting. Oh me! Oh my! Next to none of the purebloods would even qualify for an appointment based on the way the questionnaire was set up. A work of true beauty.

Slytherins screaming in pain and anguish, check.

Sirius smiled, sitting behind his large desk. It didn't take people long to see the ramifications of these new proclamations. And the new questionnaire, which would become standard for all Wizengamot elections in the future. The Charms work was a wonderful bit Sirius had conceived himself – easily on par with the Marauder's Map.

There was no conceivable way for the pureblood to regain a majority on the Wizengamot – at least not in the next few decades. Seven of the worst unimprisoned families maintained estates within five miles of each other in Wiltshire, but would be entitled to only a single representative among them in the Wizengamot. Sirius loved maps of all kinds, especially now electoral maps.

It was possible they could sell off their old estates and move into Hogsmeade or London to have more clout – but unlikely that old pureblood snobs would do so. As their official influence waned, however, they would turn to bribery, coercion, and other less friendly tactics. Sirius was rubbing his hands in excitement. Causing massive havoc even after he left office, check.

He'd actually done a lot more than charm the application for current truthfulness. The thing would stay in effect for a member's whole term of office. If it ever went black, well then, there'd have to be some Veritaserum interrogation, wouldn't there? If witches and wizards were naturally given to corruption, Sirius and his magical skills would have to countervail that...

Sirius sat in his office reading the Daily Prophet. The headlines were particularly fun.

"A Menace to Our Way of Life."

"Wizengamot Members Speak Out in Disgust."

"Creatures Protest That They Do Not Want the Right to Vote."

"Goblins Are Evil; Bake Them Into Pies, Says Imprisoned Fudge."

"Interim Minister is a Scarlet Man. Dates with Seventeen Witches over the Last Fourteen Evenings Confirmed."

Sirius laughed and laughed. Still wasn't as good as a pack of veela, but Harry would enjoy that last headline.

He skimmed the paper for any real news and found little. That was fine by Sirius. They were so taken up in controversy they couldn't really see what was happening; how the changes to civilization were already moving.

For example, three dozen house elves had recently been freed by their families and had, with Dobby as their leader, formed up a new company to do spot cleaning and cooking work on a paid basis for a large number of families. Families that would never have thought to possess house elves in the past. It hadn't taken the old pureblood families long to realize that they might have three or four voting wizards in their prospective districts, but eight or eleven house elves. The Malfoys, the Parkinsons, the Runcorns, the Notts, and all the others would have never come close to elective office again as their elves were forced to work for these families they hated. Voting was

performed in such a way that it would invalidate any master-servant bond, of course – hence the mass firings that began. And the freed elves, working for many families, were actually quite a lot happier, Sirius knew.

Dobby had been quite glad to take some money from Harry to get his new house elf service business set up. The elf was quite mad, but rather an excellent organizer. And really quite fierce with the negotiating. Sirius had handed off the negotiations between Dobby's company and the Ministry to someone else to deal with. The place needed to be cleaned, of course, but Sirius couldn't imagine trying to go up against that crazy little elf. He always tried bargaining down on the sickles and bargaining up for socks, tea cozies, and other such trifles.

The best part was that most of the elves didn't move far from their former owners. The Notts had given clothes to seven elves, all of whom moved nearby, all of whom would still be voting for anyone but a Nott in the next election. Truly short-sighted morons, not even worthy of having been a Slytherin at school.

Sirius loved every second of it! Slytherins outsmarted again, check.

He looked back down to his parchment and saw he still had a number of issues to clean up.

Hmm. Issue #4: Magical children really aren't getting much of a quality education.

Lack of competition made for sloppy, shoddy educational institutions. In Britain, it was either Hogwarts, go abroad, or get homeschooled. And all of the top OWL achievers for the last four years had been homeschooled.

Sirius had loved his time at Hogwarts, of course, but he'd learned shockingly little from the teachers.

True, most of his vast store of naughty and useless knowledge had been self-taught – the Marauder School within Hogwarts. Exploding potions, check. Non-reversible shrinking potions, check. Nudity

charms, check. Horribly embarrassed, perpetually single, nudity averse Slytherin males, check. Butterbeer conjuration, check. Animagus self-transfiguration, check. Firewhiskey distillation, check. Terribly embarrassing hexes and jinxes, check. Muggle super glue for sealing up with the Slytherin common room, check. Spell creation for even more embarrassing hexes and jinxes, check. Catching and blackmailing Filch for rubbing his cat suggestively while he spied on the female portion of the Hufflepuff Quidditch team in the showers, check. Time in the Astronomy tower focusing on the Ravenclaw female dormitories, check. Hmm, what a good day all that had been in fifth year. Happy memories, few of which Sirius still retained.

As Sirius looked at notes he and Harry had put together about the recent makeup of the school, he could see the major issues. The Potions teacher was a menace and shouldn't be allowed within a thousand meters of a child. Snivellus – the monster who was only gone because of his arrest for his Death Eater past. The history ghost bored people to sleep with his voice in five minutes flat. The Divination professor had a few prophecies to her name, but taught utter rot to the students – a complete waste of time. A good teacher resigning because of his lycanthropy; possessed, Polyjuiced, and fraudulent teachers dispatched through no good office of the Headmaster. Really, Albus was quite useless as a Headmaster, it seemed. And overall, too few teachers to really spend time with the students: seriously, one teacher to instruct transfiguration to more than four hundred students. No wonder Minerva was so gray and the students so flighty! And this Reasonable Restriction for Underage Magic – which the pureblood contingent had utterly ignored since the thing was written – was completely counterintuitive. How could students learn well and quickly when they were theoretically forced to drop their wands for two to three months per year? Sirius was against forcing more schooling on children, but they should be allowed to practice during the summers...somehow.

At least Harry was doing much better now with his hand selected tutors. He'd be ready to pass his OWLs in a few months – and had already begun NEWT-level work in Charms and Defence. He had a dueling tutor in for two hours a day, Saturdays included; Sirius doubted he'd be much match against Harry in six months or a year. The boy was proving his brilliance and, also, the fact that he hadn't

been adequately challenged at Hogwarts. He now had a decent Potions instructor, had proved his skills by brewing up one of the deadliest, vilest poisons ever known to mankind, and was attempting to catch up on the rest of the more helpful potions available, while also studying the rudiments of Muggle chemistry. He was filling in his non-magical knowledge at the same time he was preparing for a magical life. Made sense, really. The boy even had a television in his chateau – what would they think of next?

The school was to blame; tradition, too, wizarding-only prejudices. But so was his friend. Hermione was quite a nice girl – honestly, she'd helped to save Sirius' life – but she destroyed the boy's natural curiosity. Studying with her was like climbing a mountain: a whole lot of intimidating work, sweating, cursing, and pain with little pay off. She attacked work like it was an enemy to be destroyed, conquered, and paraded around in chains, while Harry obviously needed to approach subjects like they were mysteries to be enjoyed and solved. Tempt his curiosity!

Yes, now the boy was doing well. He'd even begun to learn the enchantment of objects, basic healing, estate management, modern runes and warding, muggle soccer, and a slew of subjects not taught at Hogwarts. Plus, he'd decided he might be interested in attending the magical and non-magical sections of the Sorbonne in Paris. Bright kid – plus he had a pack of veela to take care of any frustrations he might be feeling in his school work.

So, how to give all the children in Britain a better experience? Hmm. Hmm! Other nations do handle this much better than the British do. Britain does a terrible job getting Muggleborns into magical school and its laws completely favor the old-line purebloods. Oh, this will be fun! Who knew that completely boring legal language could rile up so many people?

Turning hundreds of years of legal history and precedent on its head, check.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Ministerial Proclamation #6183

Issued by Sirius Black, Interim Minister

Amendment to the International Statute of Secrecy

As recently permitted by the International Confederation of Warlocks, the Ministry of Magic will now be contacting all families of children who exhibit accidental magic, not just children from mostly or wholly magical families. Muggleborn children – or magical children from squib lines – will now be included in the secret as early as possible and given materials so they may learn of their heritage, including how to access further resources in Diagon Alley. They will also be welcomed to attend any of the public primary schools run for magical and squib children.

Violations of the secret will continue to be punishable up to, and including, total oblivation of the secret.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Ministerial Proclamation #6184

Issued by Sirius Black, Interim Minister

Amendment to the Reasonable Restriction for Underage Magic

All wand-possessing magical children between the ages of ten-and-a-half and seventeen will be permitted to perform magic in their own homes or in a designated magical area (such as Hogwarts, Hogsmeade, Diagon Alley, or Knockturn Alley) so long as no Muggles not privy to the secret witness the activities. Any violations to the International Statute of Secrecy by an underage witch or wizard will result in these increased penalties: first offence, one hundred galleon fine and a public spanking (misdemeanor); second offense, three hundred galleon fine and forty hours of community service, plus public spankings on three separate days (misdemeanor); third offense, seven hundred galleon fine, one hundred hours of community service, confiscation of wand for thirty days, image published in all Ministry buildings with identifier as “Public Idiot” (misdemeanor); fourth offense, two thousand galleon fine, loss of

wand for one year, fifteen days in a Ministry holding cell, three hundred hours of community service cleaning Muggle latrines (felony); fifth offense, loss of wand privileges (a.k.a., 'snapping of your wand'), exile from the magical community.

The Ministry will also be clearing away a small section of the former Tintern Alley to turn into a broom-flying venue so that individuals with insufficient space at their homes may be protected when practicing flying and broom-sports. The Quidditch League has generously offered to offer clinics on Quidditch several times each summer to interested witches and wizards.

Public-access floo points will be set up in Birmingham, Leeds, Glasgow, Sheffield, Edinburgh, Liverpool, Manchester, Bristol, and Cardiff so that the underage witches and wizards from around Britain may more easily reach Diagon Alley should they wish to.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Ministerial Proclamation #6185

Issued by Sirius Black, Interim Minister

Educational Standards Improvement Initiative

As of today, a comprehensive survey on every aspect of the Hogwarts experience is being completed by each current student. The survey is also offered for opinion gathering to any Hogwarts alumni or alumnae. The results of the survey will be used to pinpoint areas for improvement. The survey touches on academic subjects, academic instructors, residential life and dining, residential activities and sports, career counseling and preparedness, the prefect program, and many other subjects. Anyone wishing to make further comment is welcomed to address a letter to the Department of Educational Standards, Ministry of Magic, London. Howlers are not accepted at this time.

Delegations from Hogwarts and the British Ministry will be observing the schools at Beauxbatons, the Peruvian Institute of Mages, Salem Witches Institute, The New Zealand School of Witchcraft and

Wizardry, the Rasputin Collective of Soviet Battle Magic, and the Chinese Emperor's Pan-Asian Collegium. Officials from each of those schools will also be visiting and commenting upon Hogwarts over the coming weeks. The full results of the student survey and the inter-school visitations will be released by December.

Likewise, the Hogwarts Board of Governors will now be completely elective as of today (nomination forms will be sent to all currently eligible alumni and alumnae by owl post). All Hogwarts alumni and alumnae who have achieved at least one OWL are eligible to vote for the twelve members. Board members will serve two-year terms, be eligible for reelection, and will step down from the board during the period when their own children or wards attend Hogwarts (to avoid the appearance of favoritism) or when they are appointed to teach or administer at the school. Convicted felons are ineligible to serve on the Hogwarts Board of Governors.

The duties of the Board will change a bit. They will oversee the performance of the Headmaster, approve the list of courses, approve the hiring and firing of teachers and administrators, assist in fundraising for daily operations and the development of a school endowment, and approve the annual school budget, but will have no authority to intervene in day-to-day operations (such as who receives detentions or who will be allowed to play on Quidditch teams). The Board must vote to remove any of its own members shown to have attempted to intervene in day-to-day school operations. Such members will be transfigured into purple warthogs and placed on display for a period of thirty days in front of the Magical Menagerie with an explanatory sign.

The Ministry of Magic expects these simple reforms to have a positive benefit for our entire schooling initiative!

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Ministerial Proclamation #6186

Issued by Sirius Black, Interim Minister

Announcement of Improved Post-Hogwarts Training Opportunities

The Ministry of Magic has formed a partnership with Balliol College, Oxford, to educate qualified wizards and witches after they have received their NEWTS. Beginning in the fall of next year, individuals pursuing Masteries will be able to enter into standard, traditional apprenticeships or matriculate to Balliol College, Oxford, to study. The initial subjects covered under this partnership include Potions, Charms, Transfiguration, Duelling, Alchemy, Rituals, Warding, Magical Law, and Healing. Future expansion will likely include Magical Creatures, Herbology, Astronomy, Curse and Ward Breaking, Ancient Languages and Runes, Arithmancy and Magical Mathematics, Enchanting, Defense against Dark Arts and Creatures, and other disciplines.

Students enrolling at Balliol College should expect to spend two to three years in residence to achieve their Masteries. Full details and application materials will be available in the spring.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Sirius had loved every minute of his last two months as Minister. He'd overseen the hiring of nineteen new Hogwarts faculty members. Two more Charms and Transfiguration instructors; three new Potions teachers; a Muggle Studies teacher who'd actually lived among Muggles and even had a Muggle college degree; two History teachers to replace a recently exorcised ghost; a full-time Duelling instructor for a new elective in Duelling; and a Wizarding culture class required for first and second years and then more electives for sixth and seventh years on specialized topics; plus many more. Plus the Masters who'd be instructing at Balliol College. Alastor Moody had agreed to teach for the Duelling program. And Nicholas Flamel's oldest son, Reinhard, had agreed to teach in the Potions and Alchemy departments. It was shaping up to be quite an effort. Tons of talented witches and wizards had refused the massive workload involved in teaching at Hogwarts, but they'd been quite interested in the less time intensive Balliol College program – plus its improved salary and less annoying set of students (really, who in their right minds would teach hormonal teenagers?). Sirius thought he might get involved himself if anyone ever wanted to do an interdisciplinary

study of Pranks.

Educational revolution, check. But it wasn't the most fun. No, that was reading the letters in the Prophet and listening to the Howlers in the mailroom.

The kvetching and griping of all the old-line folks. Oh, how they could moan and groan. You'd think they were all transfigured ghouls.

How Hogwarts was being destroyed; how they were being taxed to pay for all this new-fangled tomfoolery; how the houses were now being randomized and the Sorting Hat was brought out a couple of times per year to chat with the students and also studied in the new seventh year course on Enchanting; how the prefects and Head students were being abolished as obsolete; how there were age-group common rooms throughout the castle (as recommended by the Peruvian, New Zealand, and Russian schools); how the Divination elective had been abolished and a new two week long history of Divination briefing had been instituted in History of Magic to replace it. These complainers were the sort who'd been dragged kicking and screaming into the daylight of the eighteenth century: it must be rather painful to discover that the twentieth century was nearly over and they had to catch up or drop dead of sheer age and orneriness. Even Dumbledore was planning his retirement. Sirius was putting money on Flitwick being the next headmaster. Wouldn't that be nice? Now he just had to talk Remus into going back to teach there; maybe Remus could follow Flitwick! More generations to subtly corrupt into frivolity and pranks...

So little time, so much chaos. But it was all winding up now, wasn't it?

Sirius had held his office for four and a half months. It really was the most fun he'd had in ages. The newspaper despised him; the purebloods were nearly broke and crying every day; Sirius had purchased Malfoy Manor once it came up to auction for back taxes, he planned to turn it into a Muggle bed-and-breakfast; the government coffers were quite flush; the Ministry staff had quite a number of beautiful, intelligent witches working here, many of whom Sirius knew quite intimately (Padfoot's favorite: doggy style, of

course); and the Wizengamot was filled with reasonably intelligent, mostly honest witches, wizards, squibs, and creatures. The house elves were learning to be quite harsh with their former masters and the two centaurs finally stopped gossiping about the stars and really enjoyed their work. The goblins showed off an impressive number of teeth when they smiled and voted for the harshest punishments. It had been rather difficult arranging for a water tank large enough for the merman, but it seemed to work out in the end.

Harry had been quite impressed by what Sirius had accomplished; the boy was even planning an application to Balliol (Duelling and Charms, a joint Mastery), even while he remained in residence in France. He'd bought a nearby chateau and second vineyard and attracted a second pack of veela to live in it. The boy must have the stamina of the gods! Sirius smiled, ever so proud. It was good to be a godfather; great to be Minister.

He'd taken care of lots and lots of pesky issues. He'd issued a couple dozen proclamations getting the Ministry out of people's private business: no government had a right to keep an animagus register. (Sirius smiled about that one; very few were in on the secret of his Padfoot form.) The Ministry was also out of the business of regulating the Floo; there were now three different companies that competed to set up and maintain Floo connections. Four businesses now had government licenses to freely make and disseminate or sell portkeys. And another forty people had applied for portkey creation licenses. The Ministry wasn't meant to control all means of travel, just ensure it was safe and reasonably efficient.

The Ministry no longer had a Department of Magical Games and Sports: let the Quidditch teams regulate themselves. Bunch of duffers worked there anyways. The Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures was basically gutted, as most of the magical creatures could now vote and represent their own races in the Wizengamot. The Department of Magical Transportation now took up two offices, not an entire floor, and that was basically just to test folks for their apparition licenses and to regulate the businesses that handled the floo and portkeys. The Office for the Misuse of Underage Magic now had a single wizard working in it, unlike the Office for Explaining Magic which had seventeen. On the flip side, The

Department of Mysteries got a new name (Department of Magical Research and Development) and a better staffing level, but they also had to begin reporting on a regular basis the things they learned. Their spells and newly invented potions would be sold to help keep the Ministry seriously in the black. The Department of Education Standards had more work to do, what with more Muggleborns to bring into the fold, a University program to oversee, more people than ever starting up Mastery-level work, and Hogwarts finally giving students an adequate amount of instruction to achieve excellent results on OWLs and NEWTs. And the Muggle Relations division tripled in size as the Ministry began to work more and better with the larger world outside it.

Change was good! Change was fun. That was the last message Sirius wanted to leave behind.

It was his last day and he had but two more proclamations, ones he'd really be remembered for.

Issue #5: The Daily Prophet was truly out of control.

Issue #6: A lot of good people are still hurting from the first and second Voldemort insurrections.

Thus, Sirius decided, one proclamation to deal with fixing up that slanderous rag, the Daily Prophet; the other one was a nice little boon, a bit of charity, a bit of fun, and a lot of mischief.

Sending a parting shot heard 'round the world, check.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Ministerial Proclamation #6198

Issued by Sirius Black, Interim Minister

Truth in Government and Media Initiative

To ensure a fair, accurate, and truthful accounting of government actions and policies, the following policy is enacted. All government

employees must give full, complete statements to the news media – or state “I decline to answer your question” and explain the grounds – on pain of fine and loss of employment. Government employees may not lie, use half truths, state or reveal confidential facts or invasively personal information, or twist and interpret true facts toward incorrect conclusions. Any person injured by a violation of the law may place a suit in the Wizengamot. The first conviction will be punished with a thousand galleon fine and a month’s enforced wearing of a sign that reads, “Don’t trust me. I lie all the time.” The second (felony), with a two thousand galleon fine and loss of government employment for one year (no guarantee on rehiring), plus paying for a month’s worth of advertisements showing your face, name, convicted crimes, and the slogan “Don’t Hire Me; I Got Fired For Lying.” The third (felony), ten thousand galleon fine and permanent banishment from Britain. These punishments are separate from any reparations that may be ordered for the offended party.

News media employees may not print lies, use half truths or innuendo, utilize Quick Quotes Quills or similar devices, print confidential facts about underage witches or wizards, or utilize true facts without having a minimum of two confirmatory sources. The penalties for the offender are, first conviction, one thousand galleon fine and snapping of one’s quill; second conviction (felony), three thousand galleon fine, one hundred hours of community service, and three month’s service writing the “Dear Hecate” column for lovelorn witches and wizards; third conviction, ten thousand galleon fine, six months imprisonment, plus one hundred hours of enforced viewing of the Muggle program entitled “The Jerry Springer Show”; fourth conviction, thirty thousand galleon fine, permanent banishment from Britain. (A journalist is considered not guilty of this crime if he or she received false information from a government source and assists in convicting that individual.) In addition, the responsible publication’s owner, editor, and publisher are each personally liable for an equivalent fine (but not community service or imprisonment, but including Jerry Springer) for each offense committed by an article printed in their publication. Injured parties may collect damages from the reporter, owner, editor, and publisher as well.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Ministerial Proclamation #6199

Issued by Sirius Black, Interim Minister

First Annual Naked Quidditch Charity Event

To fund the expansion and continued operations of St. Mungo's, the Ministry of Magic is inaugurating the First Annual Naked Quidditch Charity Event. In this first year, the all-female Holyhead Harpies (Gwenog Jones, Captain) will play a team from France composed entirely of veela (Harry Potter, Sponsor). Both teams will play without the encumbrance of clothing and the Golden Snitch will not be released until after the first hour of play. The former Quidditch World Cup stadium will host the event. Only specially charmed Omnioculars will be available to view the up-close play (thirty-eight galleons per pair). The first ten thousand tickets go on sale next Thursday for seventy galleons each. One hundred executive boxes with complimentary Omnioculars are also available; contact the Ministry of Magic for additional details. Additional blocks of tickets will be made available closer to the match, currently scheduled for March 17th. Unticketed witches and wizards attempting to sneak into the charity event will be transfigured into goats and tethered outside the Hogs Head Tavern in Hogsmeade for a period of one week.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Oh, it was good to be the Minister! Sirius had already received a seat in Harry's box. Fun, fun, fun.

Shocking everyone into mute silence, check.

He strolled out of his Ministry on that final day whistling an old drinking song. He had a portkey to catch and a pack of veela or two to introduce himself to. He hoped the beautiful half-birds, half-women had a third pack that would be willing to shack up with Sirius himself. He was going to be staying with his godson in France for the foreseeable future. Sirius had a deep desire to reacquaint himself with all the finer pleasures in life. Wine, good food, sun, working in the vineyards, maybe a little tutoring for his godson, plus a pack of veela.

Ah, the lazy days of retirement and self-exile. To stay away from politics for a good long while and from Britain generally. Well. Aside from coming back for important, worthwhile charity events...

Getting away unscathed with some of the world's best pranks, check.

Return of the Fudge

A/N: Wrote the Sirius portion of this no longer "one-shot" and then this little bunny hit me. The concept: Fudge becomes the next Dark Lord, can you see the comedic value in that? He really can be quite an amusing figure.

Warning: more than a touch of gross out humor. Mundungus Fletcher brings out the child in me, I expect. The dirty, nasty child... Bad! Bad!! And Dudley Dursley brings out my cruelty. Uh oh! Never say I didn't warn you: "Pig in a Wig."

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Ten long years. No floating in a pool. No bulging bag of galleons for a weekly salary. No one bowing and scraping. No Weatherby to unlace his shoes and fetch his tea. No one bribing him and telling him how smart he was, how strong, how leader-like, how virile. He was tired of being a nobody; he needed the attention, the beautiful home, and all those delicious galleons. And a good house elf made meal. Oh yes, he needed a good meal.

He blinked a few times very rapidly. Tasty meat pies; delicious greasy sausages; Yorkshire pudding with more Yorkshire pudding. And suet, suet covered in Marmite. And potatoes cooked seven ways: mashed; deep fried and mashed; mashed and deep fried; chips; crisps; stuffed jacket potatoes; and raw. Yum! And blood pudding. And blood sausage. And head cheese. And treacle tart. And a tarty treacle. With triple servings of custard over everything. And no bloody greens: no peas, no broccoli, no beans, no cabbage, no celery, no lettuces, or anything else healthy. Meat, meat, meat, potatoes, potatoes, potatoes, potatoes, meat, potatoes, and three kinds of dessert.

A proper meal after all these years. The best way to get into proper shape again.

Ten years before his release. They hadn't been kind. Dolores had been killed behind bars, Fudge heard, when she got lippy with a witch who was much smarter and stronger than her. Okay, it really could have been any witch in the prison, given those requirements; no one

had ever been convicted for Dolores' killing. She had been loathed universally inside the prison: the warden, the guards, and all of the prisoners. Even the house elves.

It would make his plan harder to accomplish, of course, not having a ridiculously sycophantic chief henchtoad. But it was still possible.

Fudge had remained intact, mostly. Physically he only shook violently a few times a night. Mentally, he was still a bit shaky. He didn't like to think about what had happened to him on lonely nights when he was locked in a cell with an unrepentant, sexually curious mountain troll. Oh, the pain; oh, the horror.

No, he couldn't think of those things any longer. He shivered a bit and then moaned lightly.

No, bad Fudge. He scolded himself. Bad thoughts! Bad thoughts. Fudge was out now. He was out and he had a plan. To get the goblins, the EMU, the people who had never voted for him in an election, and the people who had done this to him: Sirius Black and Harry Potter.

Cornelius Fudge had spent his time in prison wisely and carefully, aside from the days and days he required to heal up after being victimized by his cell mate. Now that he was free, it was time to put his master plan into motion.

Operation: Becoming the Dark Overlord.

He had an unstoppable seventeen point plan:

Occupy a dark lair with an indoor pool and a nice view of the sea.

Learn the Killing Curse (or at least a respectable version of the Cutting Curse).

Gather followers, lots and lots of followers. Smart ones, too. Willing to work without wages a definite plus.

Find a new chief henchtoad, someone a touch smarter than Dolores and less smarmy and blonde than Lucius Malfoy.

Design a dark mark, a truly fearsome brand: perhaps a smiling monkey or a clown with red hair.

Get money (or hire someone who understands how to raise/steal money or at least convince someone to bribe you for some reason, the old reliable) in such a way as to anger the goblins: an amount large enough to shame Harry Potter.

Perform several illegal dark rituals to enhance the Fudge virility: he'd need a dark heir, of course.

Find a young, beautiful witch (pureblooded, of course) willing to bear his dark heir: or at least some Muggle date rape drugs to take care of any struggling.

Start a whisper campaign to let everyone know a new fearsome dark lord was coming.

Capture a pack of veela – because Potter and Black each had their own packs.

Destroy the Quidditch League, because Potter bought a team after he finished playing.

Capture Potter Manor. Turn it into a home for the werewolves he'd recruit.

Capture Black Manor. Turn it into a home for the fierce, fierce Cornish pixies he'd recruit.

Retake the Ministry of Magic and the EMU building in Brussels.

Name Fudge Emperor of Magical Britain and Grand Poobah of the EMU. And sit on golden thrones in the Ministry and in Brussels for everyone to watch and adore.

Hold elections every four weeks and force all witches and wizards to 'Vote Fudge' every time. Publish the results again and again.

Conquer the world.

It was foolproof. It was perfect. Not even Potter or Black could stand in his way.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Who knew it was this hard to find decent real estate close to the ocean? Fudge spent three months riding a moped he'd stolen from a grandmotherly type examining one beachfront property after another. Either they weren't dark enough, which sets a poor example to the followers, or they didn't have much of a view or, like most of the nearly perfect dark lair candidates, there was no pool. The pool was definitely a deal breaker. This Dark Overlord liked to float on his back during times of stress. Oh, yes, and he liked to eat bon-bons. Chocolate ones. Or chocolate with cinnamon or orange. Oh, yes, swimming pools and dark chocolate bon-bons.

It was a Thursday when he had a very bad day while searching for an appropriately grand, austere, terrifying, and luxurious dark lair. Fudge had been chased by dogs at three different estates. The last one had managed to maul off a good chunk of his left buttock before Fudge remembered he was a qualified wizard and could apparate.

It was sad, really, that Fudge had once headed the Department of Magical Accidents and Catastrophes as he suddenly had a rather gruesome splinching. Now he was without both buttocks. And feeling more than a bit woozy.

Blast, double blast. He'd left his moped behind and couldn't go back to get it until he healed up. So he gave up looking for the perfect dark lair. He just needed someplace to sleep off the effects of his splinching. Maybe his buttocks would grow back? Oh well, didn't matter, they were rather larger than they should have been.

Finally, with a sense of desperation, he settled on a cave, just outside Inverness, that was fifty feet from where he was standing. It didn't

have a view or an indoor swimming pool, but it certainly was dark and dank.

Step one, complete. He passed out for three days while his body's weak store of magic attempted to heal his mostly self-inflicted wounds.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Fudge looked again at the cute, stunned rabbit at his feet. He'd summoned it and stunned it with a good deal of difficulty. Now on to the next part of the lesson. "Avada Kedavra." Nothing happened. No green light; no dead bunny.

"Avada Kedavra," he said with a desperately pleasing voice. He wanted the spell to work, really he did. Plus he was hungry and thought he might be able to get a fire going so he could roast the rabbit. Cornelius didn't conjure food well, so he really had to fend for himself. Well, he could conjure marshmallows, but they were mostly air anyway. Not very filling, and he jumped around like a deranged tick for a good half hour because of all the sugar, too. He needed meat. Meat and potatoes and brown sauce and brown bread and tarty treacles and custard sauce, oh yes, and custard sauce.

He pointed his wand again. "Avada Kedavra." Nada. The pesky rabbit wouldn't die.

"Avada Kedavra." He shouted this time. He was mad.

"Avada Kedavra." Still nothing. Blast. Double blast!

"Avada Kedavra." Ah ha! He got some kind of a greenish looking wisp. It wasn't the Killing Curse, but it was something.

He kept shouting the curse away. Five more times he got the greenish mist, then it went away. Another five times, nothing. His wand felt dead in his own hand.

"Avada Kedavra." Nothing. Less than nothing.

Ah hell. It wasn't working. Time for the backup plan.

“Diffindo.”

Yes: the Cutting Curse flew out of his wand. Excellent work. It was a moment later that Fudge realized his problem. He hadn't been aiming very closely. The rabbit was still stunned and alive. However, Fudge was now short three toes on his right foot. He promptly fell down and began screaming and cursing like Dolores had just sat on him. Not that she ever had or anything. Really. That was another thing never to be spoken of. Never!

The pain refocused his concentration back to his bleeding, mangled foot. He tried out the half dozen healing spells he knew, but nothing much seemed to work. Still, he had the important spell down. The Dark Overlord's much feared Cutting Curse. Even if he was losing blood and consciousness both at a rapid clip. Very impressive.

Step two, complete. His Cutting Curse was good enough to cut off his own limbs. (He'd already mentally struck off the desire to learn the Killing Curse; no point in it really.) Fudge promptly passed out and the healing magic within his body took four days to fully staunch the bleeding and scab everything over.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

A well bandaged Cornelius Fudge stalked through Knockturn Alley on a dark and spooky night. Every step was torture, but he did have a master plan to complete. Not only did his foot hurt him, but his ruined and absent buttocks made it nearly impossible to walk in a manner sufficiently dignified for a Dark Overlord. So he had to walk slowly, jerkily, and without muttering in pain. Not prudent and certainly not dignified.

He looked over all the beggars and layabouts he saw, all drunk, all sleeping noisily. None of them yet would make a good follower. Where did the slightly better class of ruffians and cutthroats hang out? Someone like Lucius but who worked at a cheaper price? Smart, vicious, but with less smarm?

Too bad really that Lucius was still in prison and would never get out unless it was as a ghost. Same for Rookwood, McNair, and all the others who had served the last Dark Lord. A pity. Fudge would have to start recruiting from scratch. He sighed.

Blast! Double blast! Who knew that being a Dark Overlord was quite this much work? It was dark out, he was cold, and he felt scared walking alone in Knockturn Alley even though he was a Dark Overlord.

He walked slowly and painfully through the Alley until he came across an obviously drunk man who kept exposing himself. 'At least this one is awake and upright,' Fudge thought.

"You. You, what's your name?"

"What's 'ta ya?"

"I want to know your name, you knave..."

"Dung, t'ey call ma Dung."

"I can certainly smell why, Mr. Dung." The disheveled, partially nude man just grunted in annoyance. "Well, you see, I am recruiting an army of dark followers so that I may retake my proper place in the world and the like..."

"Will thar ba lootin'?"

"Oh, yes, most certainly. Pillaging, general disorderliness, looting, forcible conquest, rowdiness, murder most foul, burglary, lying, and perhaps even some of the lesser forms of depravity, such as singing dirty songs and such...I haven't yet decided on that last bit, you know."

"Ima in." He muttered something about 'addin' great bleedin' buggery ter ta list.'

"Come along, Mr. Dung. We have more to recruit. And we have to find you a shower... And could you stop flashing me like that. It's

quite revolting; boils the size of snitches, I say. You really should have that looked at. Pus should definitely not be that color. Or that quantity. Can't be hygienic."

"Feels betta when I flash 'im ina wind, ya know?"

"Keep them in your robes, Mr. Dung. We have standards of cleanliness, particularly since our Dark Lair doesn't have any running water and I seem to have forgotten the watering spell, you see... No, really, stop flashing that thing everywhere. Boils. Oh ho. I say, old Dung, is that gangrene?"

"Dun't use 't 'nuf, you see. Fallin' off, I spect."

"Revolting, Mr. Dung, positively revolting. We'll have to see if we can find a Healer who'll work for gratis... Maybe they can publish photos in some medical journal or something to help defray the costs. It certainly looks and smells, er, unique."

"Feels betta when Ima scratchin', ya know..."

"Will you stop that, Mr. Dung?"

Steps three and four, complete and with no loss of consciousness. Dung was now the first follower and chief henchtoad for the Dark Overlord Gnuiucfes. Excellent.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

"No, that's it, Mr. Dung," Cornelius shouted. "I will not infect all my followers with whatever kind of plague you seem to have and call that my mark. I won't have it, you see..."

"It's dead usefu', ya know? Makes it's own cheese, it does..."

Fudge screamed then. He pulled out his wand and shouted, "Diffindo." The weak spell just bounced off the shield Dung put up. The man was still holding his pestilential privates and managed to cast a shield. Fudge was revolted and impressed at the same time.

“Stop flashing it around. I can see the green puss even in this dark cave, you know. It’s revolting on so many levels...”

“W’ll, if thar’s wot you really fink...” Dung drew out his wand and cast “Diffindo.” Fudge didn’t even know a basic shielding spell so the Cutting Curse parted Cornelius from another three of his toes.

“I did yer a favor, I did, guv. But I wan’t be takin’ na abuse, now werl I? No! Best ter be off, nah, righy-oh.”

With that Cornelius lost his toes, his follower, his chief henchtoad, and his only reason for trying to think up a suitable dark mark. “Bugger it,” Fudge said. “Don’t need followers and I won’t need a dark mark, even though a sleeping bunny is quite menacing.”

Thus, he cancelled out steps three, four, and five of his master plan. And promptly passed out again.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

It wasn’t fair. The goblins said that he wasn’t a good credit risk – and that his plan for being a Dark Overlord was quite full of holes. Holes, Fudge thought. What holes? It was a perfect plan. He had a dark lair and a respectable version of the Cutting Curse. True, he’d lost his only follower and his need for a dark mark, but followers were overrated. They would just as likely mutiny as follow – now, wouldn’t they? It was all working out perfectly.

But no, no one believed in the Dark Lord Gnuiucfes. The dwarves wouldn’t invest and neither would the acromantulas. However, Fudge wasn’t too broken up over the last one. The giant spiders seemed to consider broken skeletal remains to be a form of currency. Wouldn’t be much use for a man in Fudge’s position, now would it? How many dark mercenaries could he hire – or dark ritual ingredients purchase – with forty pounds of broken bones?

Bah! Where was he going to get money at this time of night? Well, he could try robbing something... Yes, yes, that was it. Robbery! He was a wizard. He could rob, rob, rob the Muggles until the cows came home.

So he worked through the night. Convenience stores, very good. He knocked off three. Late night food wagons, four of those made for a decent haul plus a nice falafel and some rather decent fish and chips. Then he made his mistake. He walked into Big Bubba Benson's All Night Shoppe and attempted to rob it. Two shotgun blasts, one splinching accident, and many, many girlish shrieks later, a bloody Cornelius Fudge returned to his dark, dank lair. When he woke up five days later, partially healed in and around his chest and right thigh, he decided that the night's work hadn't been worth nearly losing his life. The muggle money would only be worth forty-seven galleons, six sickles when converted.

Thus, he canceled step six. He'd go guerilla and operate without a budget. Who needed money when they had motivation, hmm? Then he'd impose a poll tax later on and force witches and wizards to pay for the privilege of 'Voting Fudge' every month for the rest of their lives. Two galleons per vote, a very decent price for paying homage to a great man, the Dark Overlord of Fudgeland.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Cornelius was feeling quite out of sorts. He'd attempted to utilize numerous dark rituals to improve his completely dessicated libido. But come up dry. Limp as a limpet. Hanging loose like only a goose could. Completely and totally flaccid and then some.

Dark rituals took too long, for one. And were expensive as hell: required all sorts of rare, expensive ingredients, like a dozen freshly harvested erumpent testicles and dragon semen and narwhal urine and such disgusting things. And they, unfairly, Cornelius thought, required an all too demanding standard of magical knowledge and ability. Cornelius had passed three NEWTs with an 'A': History of Magic, Herbology, and Astronomy. And three NEWTs was the absolute minimum required for a career at the Ministry, so that's what Fudge had done. He didn't even have OWLs in Transfiguration or Defense and only an 'A' in Charms at the OWL level. He was quite nearly useless when it came to wand work. But he wasn't admitting it publicly, no sir.

But the biggest problem was something else entirely. The rituals he'd heard about sounded like they were enormously painful. Pluck out your own eye and eat it sort of pain; set yourself on fire with kerosene and a Muggle match sort of pain. Long lasting irreversible pain. So Fudge scrubbed that idea. Oh yes, good food is welcome, but never pain.

So now he was turning to the muggle methods: no time delay, fairly inexpensive, and little to no pain (for Fudge at least). He needed things things called Viagra and Rohypnol. Just the things to give the old soldier a little bit of lead – and to keep the counterattack at bay from whatever lucky pureblooded witch Fudge selected without her consent. Now, according to his memory, there was only one reliable source in the wizarding world for such Muggle oddities: the famous Mundungus Fletcher, barterer in all illicit goods. Hopefully the old smuggler was still operating; ten years was a long time to still be operating illegal businesses.

But, he kept his ears open and discovered that this Mundungus Fletcher was still operating. So the Dark Overlord Gnuiucfes made his way to where this Mundungus made his office: the furthest, dirtiest, smallest back room at the Hogs Head in Hogsmeade.

Fudge pushed his way through the narrow corridor and wound up stopped in front of a massive bruiser of a man.

“Let me through, you peasant.”

“No one sees da boss unless’n I’s be introducing ‘em, you see?”

“Well, then, inform your boss that the Dark Overlord Gnuiucfes is here to transact some business. Be quick about it, my dear sir, unless you wish to feel my wand severing your hand or some such pleasantry...”

“Gnuiucfes, huh? Never ‘eard of tha’ un, you see. What’s it mean, then?”

“Mean?”

The massive wizard just shook his head. "Like Voldemort meanin' 'flight from death,' you see, symbolizin' his fear o' death, you see. So w'at you's name be a-meanin' then, eh?"

Fudge wasn't aware that Voldemort meant anything. So he made up a meaning for his pseudonym.

"You simpleton, it means the 'death of the ordinary.'"

"I dun't ged it. What language it mean it in, then?"

"Language?"

"Not French, you see, or Latin. Learnt them up w'en I was a bogey-nosed tot. So what language you usin' then?"

"Er, Sankrit."

"Got it. Going for the olden days, getting' medieval on everyone's ass, very tricky, I say."

Fudge let out a sigh of relief. How was he to know that Dark Overlords had to have names that meant something? It was hard enough with the anagrams, you see. Cornelius Vnkroard Fudge didn't lend itself to many palatable names: the Dark Overlord Gnuiucfes was the best he could do.

"I'd just be seein' if the boss is up to bidness 'ssociates, then, right?"

The massive bruiser stepped through the doorway and then reappeared. "Get inside, then, you hear?"

Fudge let himself get pushed inside. And then he saw this famous Mundungus Fletcher, the same flaxen, greasy haired man he'd recruited to be his first follower. The stench of his skin disease filled the small room and the man was obviously fondling himself underneath the table.

"Dung. You're the famous smuggler Mundungus Fletcher?"

“Oh, it’s yer again, Mr. Dark Overlord Huffl’puff. What a pile of tosh, I’d say.” Here he groped himself rather fiercely and the foul smell in the small room increased dramatically.

“I did come to transact some business with you...”

“Bidness. Wid ya? I may be vile, but I aren’t dumb, Huffl’puff. Yer dun’t got ter money ter talk wid me, your Rancidness...”

Fudge was just about to lay in and defend himself from this character assassination when the bruiser stepped back inside the room. For the briefest moment, the smell seemed to relent a bit. Then it was just as bad as ever: mustiness, decay, and foulness with acrid undertones and the smell of dying tissues.

“Got merself Jeremy to keep idgits like yerself out of my hair, dun’t ya know? Yer been promisin’ plunder and lootin’ and I got tosh for it, yer great bloody wanker. Get yer great arse out of my sight, you bleedin’ poncy fanny.”

Fudge erupted out of the room after the lesson in colloquial swearing. He tugged up robes and tried not to trip as he fled the place. Hmm, maybe spawning a dark heir and functioning reproductive system weren’t all that important in the grand scheme of things. He could adopt or something. Or, to be more evil, he could just steal an appropriately promising child. Yes, an evil looking child, someone who seemed powerful and intimidating. A proper dark heir to a Dark Overlord. Yes, jolly good, a revision to the plan!

Steps seven and eight, ‘revised’ and promptly forgotten. At least he was still conscious, even if his ears were still ringing a bit and his face a bit flushed in embarrassment. It really was hard, perilous work being a Dark Overlord.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Starting a whisper campaign was also harder than Fudge had expected. He’d told a dozen people over the last two days about the powerful new Dark Overlord coming down the pipeline.

The common response: “Well, if he’s so blooming powerful, what’s he done and why haven’t I heard of him?”

Fudge, unfortunately, didn’t have a great answer for that. He tried out a few mediocre ones, though.

“He killed the Giant Squid in the Black Lake for laughs, you see.”

“He ran off and exhausted an entire pack of veela, didn’t you hear? Great stamina and prowess. Make them beg for a reprieve.”

“He broke into Azkaban and leveled the place. Ministry’s hushing it up.”

“He put Minister Scrimgeour under the Imperius and has him training a pet monkey and a cute bunny rabbit on the weekends. Ah, yes, and killing Muggles on the week days, yes, that’s right.”

“He kills a dozen Muggles a day and drinks their blood. Says it’s to keep off the extra weight, you know. Lots of fancy dress parties to attend when one is a Dark Overlord; lots and lots of too-rich food.”

“He split his soul a dozen different ways and gave the horcruxes out as party favors after a Girl Scout gathering. No one will ever find them all; no one! The devious Girl Scouts hid every last one.”

“He ate Albus Dumbledore’s liver with some fava beans, manchego cheese, shiitake mushrooms, and a nice Amarone. And he burned the rest on a massive bonfire. For kicks.”

“He summoned a demon from the underworld just so he could play gobstones with it. And he won, you know. Really quite a genius with the gobstones.”

“He ate unpasteurized cheese from France and lived to tell the tale.”

Only the one about the unpasteurized cheese had any credibility. And it wasn’t even that daring or impressive.

Cornelius' problem is that he told the one about the veela pack getting ravished by this dark overlord whose-it to a stunning beautiful blonde girl. In the seconds it took for Fudge to figure out what was going on, the blonde girl had turned into a massive bird and claws and fireballs were heading his way.

He apparated away but managed to splinch again, leaving a good chunk of his forearm back with the veela. His healing spells were worthless, so he passed out again, this time for a full week.

Steps nine and ten fell. He couldn't even defend himself against a single veela, let alone an entire amorously aroused pack. It was all a blooming failure, he realized in his pained dreams. He was beginning to have second thoughts.

He'd lost more than half his toes, he was living in a dark, dank cave, he had no followers or even a dark mark to his credit, he wasn't able to copulate or produce a dark heir, and he couldn't even start a decent whisper campaign because he had no great exploits to trumpet. Could he be wrong? Could this all be a tremendous mistake?

No, of course not, he realized when he awoke. Fudge was never wrong. The master plan was a stroke of genius. Potter and Black would never be able to defend against it.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Fudge apparated to the stadium that Harry Potter owned in the Quidditch League: Puddlemere United, the team he'd flown for during six straight winning seasons and two Quidditch World Cups. He was going to start his reign of terror here, today, with this very structure. He'd level it to the ground and then urinate all over the cinders and laugh in his best evil voice.

Oh, it would be wonderful.

But, first, how to get inside. The wards were near impregnable, but, ah, Cornelius saw an opening. Damn, blast and double blast. It had a

long line leading up to it and a half dozen security trolls standing nearby. It was the ticket line, the only vulnerability in the wards.

Thus, Cornelius Fudge, better known as the Dark Overlord Gnuiucfes, got into the ticket line. He'd contribute a handful of galleons to the evil Potter and then burn his stadium down, hopefully causing all the spectators to trample each other, creating a wonderful gore bath and a very nice story for his Dark Overlord Scrapbook. Pictures and true stories were very important, Cornelius now knew, for starting whisper campaigns. Soon this Dark Lord would be able to claim the destruction of the Quidditch League! A wonderfully evil achievement in anyone's mind.

He waited in line for twenty minutes before he confronted the bored looking grandmother manning the ticket booth.

"Ticket is sixty-three galleons. They're playing the Vrastra Vultures, you know..."

Fudge frowned. His budget didn't have that kind of flexibility. He quickly totaled up his assets, not much changed since his earlier robbery attempts (especially given that he was mostly unconscious since then).

"I have forty-seven galleons, one sickle will that get me in the gate?"

The lady looked up in surprise. "Sorry!" Then she pointed at the next in line and shouted, "Next!"

But Fudge didn't move. He really needed to get inside and burn the stadium down. Really!

So he drew out his wand and prepared to blast away with his Cutting Curse. Only before the words came out of his mouth, he found a security troll's club had taken off the first three inches of his weeping willow and flobberworm snot core wand. The troll's second clubbing action broke Fudge's arm bones into six distinct fragments.

He remembered again that he was a wizard, fully qualified, and was permitted to do magic, such as apparition. So he apparated away

with his broken wand and shattered arm before he could sustain even more damage to his precious person.

Another step incomplete, damn it was painful and expensive being a Dark Overlord. He passed out just as those words crossed his mind. This time he remained in a tepid healing coma for two weeks. All of this unconsciousness was keeping down the food bills at least.

X-X-X-X-X-X-X-X

Right, moving on. Fudge did not dwell in the past, or on past failures, or in the dark, lonely, all-too-frequent nights when that amoral, sexually curious troll slaked his lusts upon his cell mate... No, Fudge did not dwell but he did moan for just a moment. Moving forward: destroy or capture Potter Manor. Now where had Dolores sent those Dementors all those years ago? Ah, yes, Number 4 Privet Drive, Little Whinging.

Right! On to Potter Manor.

He had given up his old, broken wand as a bad job and had taken to using a twig he'd found in the forest outside his cave. It was some kind of dark semi-rotted wood and he'd applied a copious amount of some kind of animal feces to it. It seemed to work as well as his old wand.

He apparated into Little Whinging and wandered around for a few hours until he discovered Privet Drive. Damn if all these houses didn't look identical. Were all Muggles this destitute of imagination? At least Xeno Lovegood's place looked different from Arthur Weasley's. When he went to conquer those two, it would be easy to tell them apart. It's best to know whom one is destroying, Fudge decided. Plus, the red hair was sort of a giveaway for the Weasley clan.

He found Number 4 rather quickly and started to plot. He tried casting a Fire spell at the residence, but it just made some grass smolder. Then he tried a Bludgeoning Hex. It chipped off some paint.

“Ruddy British houses, tough as nails,” Fudge said. He tried a color-changing jinx and that did nothing, then a Cutting Curse at one of the windows. It made a minute crack in one of the windows.

“Blast, double blast. Blast it all to Hades!”

He picked up a small stone and hucked it at the almost imperceptibly damaged window. But, of course, his aim was very poor.

It flew, instead, right inside the opened window to one of the rooms Dudley Dursley had commandeered for himself in the basement. Which caused a rather fascinating chain of events to occur.

But first, some background on perhaps the only person as pathetic as Cornelius Fudge in our sad story. Dudley Dursley had been fired from a surprising number of legitimate jobs in his few years of semi-adult life: Grunnings, a position his father had arranged for him after failing out of Smeltings, for stealing twenty-seven drill presses and abandoning them in an alleyway, an action which brought Vernon’s massive expense account padding into question and also lost him his job; from Sainsbury’s, where Dudley kept on feeling up one of the eighty-three year old assistants, claiming her body was ‘smashing’ and ‘very, very tempting’; from Marks and Spencer, where he managed to punch out three different customers in a thirty-four minute period on his second day of employment; from Debenhams, where he got into a shouting match with his supervisor two weeks into his job, repeatedly calling the poor woman a ‘freak’ and a ‘bloody, effing monster’ more than three dozen times; from WH Smith, when a customer asked if he could recommend a book to her, “A book,’ he’d screamed, “I’ve never read a freakish, poncy little book in my life, you great bull dyke.”

Then he’d turned back to familiar territory: living in his parent’s house (the basement) and roughing people up for their pocket change. But he’d chosen a few of his victims poorly. Dudley had been stabbed twice, been beaned with bricks, logs, stones, and a cement garden gnome, lost his right hand ‘piggy’ pinky finger to an angry reprisal, been struck by a lorry and knocked to the ground, and had a scar on his face that stretched from scalp down to his jaw from a bigger, more successful bully on the next subdivision. A failure at petty assault and

stick-up work, he'd turned to drug resale and manufacturing. In point of fact, he'd set up a small crystal methamphetamine laboratory in his parents' own basement.

Thus the small rock Cornelius threw accidentally through the window hit a mostly empty tin of chocolate biscuits on Dudley's makeshift workbench. That tin skidded a few inches and knocked over a flask of flammable chemicals. The flask hit the floor and rolled over to where Dudley kept his personal-use drug paraphernalia. The few drops of flammable materials still present on the flask reacted very poorly to some of the residues on the bong and the glass device shattered into a few hundred pieces. One of them managed to fly up and stab one of the soft plastic keys on Dudley's half-demolished stereo, which turned on at full volume. The profoundly moving bass line to the song currently playing managed to knock over a half dozen trinkets he'd stolen from small children in the neighborhood, including one tin soldier that plunked off a shelf and fell into a cup half filled with orange soda. The soda and the tin soldier began a rather interesting chemical reaction that had orange goo flowing down the front of a television set. That nearly short circuited the device out and resulted in the television turning back on while the DVD player continued to loop Dudley's favorite piece of bestiality porn, where he himself made his debut as "The Original Pig in a Wig" who had the responsibility for rutting with a real live pig on camera for seventeen minutes. The DVD had sold a grand total of seven copies worldwide. The television suddenly fell over and landed on the carpeted floor. The orange liquid goo interacted strangely and before one could say "Quidditch" there was a small fire started on the floor of Dudley's porn theatre/music hall/meth lab.

The fire gradually gained in strength. And then a small tendril of it connected with the chemicals that had been knocked off Dudley's workbench. That ignited quickly and violently. A trail of flames licked back up Dudley's workbench. And quickly the whole table was alight. Cans and flasks of various noxious chemicals began exploding.

Standing forty feet away, Cornelius was amazed to see the basement lighting up because he'd thrown a stone accidentally through a window. His wand hadn't done a damn thing, but a stone did. Yes! This part of the plan had been an absolute success. Potter Manor

would burn to the ground in a matter of minutes. The Dark Overlord Gnuiucfes was on his way to greatness, acclaim, perpetually rigged elections where he was always guaranteed to win with ninety-nine point three percent of the vote. A little dissent went a long way in the future nation of Fudgeland.

As he was already congratulating himself on his victory as a Dark Overlord, the Dursley house exploded into a few hundred thousand shards. The rather potent blend of chemicals Dudley kept on hand for his nefarious activities went up in a massive conflagration. Dudley's room was vaporized. Even his toilet managed to explode, which was rather unfortunate for Cornelius Fudge.

You see, the toilet seat flew out of the ruins of the house with a speed and pitch that had it on a dead accurate trajectory for Cornelius Fudge's bulging neckline. It was also unfortunate that Cornelius had not been knocked down by the blast or had not chosen to run away from the situation. No, he had fully intended to watch the house burn to the ground. If anything, he was stunned into place when it exploded.

That was how it came to pass that Cornelius Fudge died that day when Dudley Dursley's oversized, triple steel reinforced toilet seat decapitated his rather pleased head from his rather battered body. Less than half the proper number of toes, no buttocks, and many other self-inflicted wounds.

Thus, Cornelius Fudge died believing he'd accomplished step number twelve in his master plan. When in truth, he hadn't even located Potter Manor, just a hated home from Harry Potter's childhood. He wound up being the only victim, as the Dursleys were visiting a demented Marge Dursley in a Muggle sanitarium, and Fudge's remains were never identified by the Muggle authorities. He was buried in a Potter's field under total and everlasting obscurity. The Dark Overlord Gnuiucfes, indeed.

Fitting really.

The moral of the story? Never throw stones at meth labs! Oh, and don't attempt to become Dark Overlord Hufflepuffs. It never works.

And, finally, if you attempt to attack Harry Potter, even if he never notices you, you'll still get your just desserts.

THE END (of a rather psychotic story)